

SUNlite

Shedding some light on UFOlogy and UFOs



Just because a UFO seen by a witness, however credible, appears to that person to be a structured object, this does not mean that a structured object was actually present. All too often alien spacecrafts are built by the shipyards of the mind.

Jenny Randles - UFO! Danger in the air



All that glitters is not gold

UFOlogy continues to ignore or offer weak arguments against explanations offered for some of their high-profile cases. The recent Discovery Channel Canada program has demonstrated this by including some of the worst cases that UFOlogy has to offer and not presenting any skeptical arguments/explanations. As best I can tell from the response by those promoting those cases, they avoid discussing these explanations in public or even mentioning the names of those proposing the explanations. Because of this attitude, I decided to dedicate a good portion of this issue to the Yukon UFO mothership case of 1996. I really am not revealing anything new but I wanted to present the case for the reader as presented by its proponents as well as the explanation presented by Ted Molczan and Harro Zimmer.

There was quite a dustup at the UFO Iconoclast(s) blog recently. I tried to chronicle what transpired on Rich Reynold's blog in the "Who's blogging" section. Some of his entries in January were difficult to follow as he deleted several and then altered others. I had to ask others to see if I had read what he had written was correct. I realize that Mr. Reynolds has the right to put up, remove, and edit whatever he has written but he really should do his editing before posting.

While Reynolds feels free to alter his blog at his whim, I attempt to leave my issues intact. Still, I make mistakes and attempt to clarify or correct them in the following issue. In SUNlite 6-1, I had an article about Venus, where I closed with the statement that the first thing an investigator should check for when a UFO is reported was "where was Venus?" I should have been more specific that I was referring to nocturnal UFO reports. While Venus can be seen in the daylight, it does not generate daylight UFO reports the way it does at night.

I want to thank Marty Kottmeyer for another one of his interesting articles involving UFOs on the fourth of July. In my opinion, the most likely source of these reports may have something to do with what you see in the image above. I am not exactly sure when "Chinese Lanterns" became a trend to celebrate the fourth of July but the first time I recall seeing one in flight during a fourth of July was back in 2010 (I know the date because I recorded it with my camera). Since then, I have seen them every so often during the summer at the beach and elsewhere. I suppose some people consider them less dangerous and more tranquil than the standard pyrotechnics that abound during this festivity.

Just prior to closing up publication I saw this link, where there seems to be a plan to execute an extensive UFO hoax on April 5, 2014 at 8PM local time. At that time, dozens/hundreds of amateurs will fly their small remote controlled "drones", with LED lights, into the sky to spark UFO sightings. Keep an eye open in your local area to see if anything happens.

Front: NASA image of an ATV re-entry on September 29, 2008. This kind of display is probably what produced the Yukon mothership UFO of December 1996. See page 10 for details. Image from <http://atv.seti.org/>.

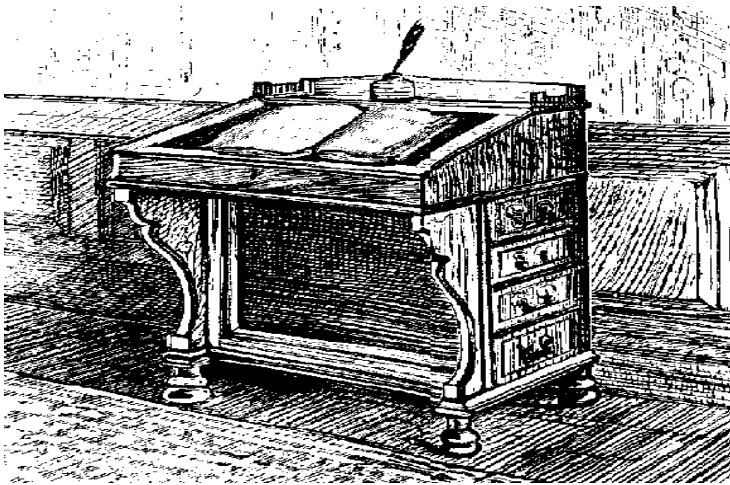
Left: On page 23, Marty Kottmeyer discusses the recent rise in UFO reports around the fourth of July. He also noted similar spikes around December 31/January 1. These spikes did not exist in Blue Book files and Marty ponders why UFOs recently decided to help celebrate these holidays. The obvious candidate is seen to the left. Chinese lanterns were not a common celebration device until recently.

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Who's blogging UFOs?

Hot topics and varied opinions



Gilles Fernandez "Airship wave" article came under attack from Rich Reynolds in January. Back in November, Gilles had posted his original article on the UFO Iconclast(s) blog. After posting a commentary, where he called Gilles' work "skeptical propaganda", Rich then removed Gilles' article from his blog. Prior to publishing SUNlite 6-1, I noticed this and had asked Gilles if he asked it to be removed and he said it was Reynolds' decision. As a result, he posted a revised version of this article on his own blog. On January 4th, Mr. Reynolds posted a link to Gilles' entry, identifying it as a "superb exegesis" (this blog entry would eventually "disappear"). Based on this, one would think he had withdrawn his previous description of the writing as "skeptical propaganda". However, just two days later he restated his original position and called Gilles' work "sloppy" and "fictional". His counterargument seems to indicate that, instead of witnesses mistaking objects like Venus for an airship, some inventive individuals designed, constructed, and

flew these airships. Reynolds provides no strong evidence to support this conclusion other than speculation. This is one of the reasons I found his argument less than compelling. Rich then accused Fernandez of falsely portraying Venus as seen in the night sky. I pointed out that Gilles had used an image from Stellarium planetarium software (in order to show the planet's position in the sky for the date, time, and location) and that was how Venus appeared on the computer. Had Mr. Reynolds simply downloaded and used the software, he would have recognized that this was the case. Instead of admitting that he might have been mistaken, his response seemed to indicate that Gilles purposefully selected this software in order to get this image. This indicated to me that rational discussion was no longer possible. Not satisfied with accusing Gilles of intentionally misleading his readers, Mr. Reynolds also accused skeptics of ignoring him and siding with Mr. Fernandez. Like so many UFO proponents, he decided that "debunkers" had evil intentions where none were intended.

Reynolds' other complaint had to do with Gilles' use of the term, "false memory", to explain some of the confusion in the reports. He stated that these were first hand accounts and implied that memory was not even involved. Reynolds misses the point that the news media was reporting what the witnesses told them based on their memory of what they saw. As Elizabeth Loftus notes, even short term memory can be affected by outside factors resulting in false memories of an event. What appears to be a significant factor is the witness' prior expectations. If the witnesses wanted to see an "airship", it is possible they could turn a light in the sky, like Venus, into a false memory out of what they expected. This memory might include engine noises, distant voices, and even seeing a dark craft behind the light.

In mid-January, Rich Reynolds pulled his blog from the internet. However, his other blogs like the UFO PROVOCATEUR(S) remained. I originally thought that he was following through with a statement he had made in one of his deleted postings and was going to stop writing about UFOs. This was short-lived when Reynolds restored his blog and called it a "social experiment" so he could see who his friends and "non-friends" were. The last time I tried a similar "social experiment", I think I was six or seven years old when I tried to run away from home to see if anybody cared about me. This got even stranger when Reynolds deleted any mention of the word "social experiment" or why he had shut down his blog from this entry a few days later. I suppose it is one of those things that make you go hmmm.....

UFO updates has been revived on Facebook. Since I reserve Facebook for friends and family, I prefer not to get involved in heated discussions about UFOs in that forum. Isaac Koi would also develop a discussion list called "The UFO collective", which appears to be the real replacement for UFO Updates. These lists bear watching to see how they develop. I commend Isaac Koi for spearheading this effort. I hope it evolves into something that is fruitful and not become just another UFO support group.

Citizen hearing on disclosure witness and former Canadian defense minister, Paul Hellyer decided to open his mouth and tell everybody the truth about aliens and UFOs. In a rather bizarre interview on Russian Television, he stated that aliens were walking among us and, even though they have the technology, refuse to help us because of the way humans live on this planet. His commentary was so crazy that even Billy Cox could not accept it.

Ted Molczan has released the eighth version of his visible re-entries catalogue with more entries. This catalogue continues to be an excellent resource for identifying past UFO events.

Kevin Randle posted a video of Budd Hopkins interviewing Phillip Corso about some of his wild claims. Surprisingly, Hopkins was very skeptical and it is amusing to watch Corso try and dodge some of the pointed questions. Not many people really find Corso's claims credible today but how many still believe that scientists have reverse engineered the crashed Roswell spacecraft,

Who's blogging UFOs? (Cont'd)

which is the premise of his story?

Robert Sheaffer and Tim Hebert criticized the most recent Discovery Channel Canada production about UFOs. Highlighting the first show were two UFO cases that, I thought, had been explained. The first was the Yukon UFO case of December 11, 1996. Robert pointed out that the producers failed to even mention the good work by Ted Molczan and Harro Zimmer, which demonstrated that the likely cause of the sighting was the re-entry of one of the rocket stages that had launched Cosmos 2335 less than 24 hours earlier. Meanwhile, Tim, as an expert on USAF missile operations, found the production about the missile shutdown very poor and thought the show had ignored a lot of important facts that have been discussed about the mythical Oscar flight shutdown over recent years. As always, the UFO missile shutdown at Oscar flight boils down to the testimony of Robert Salas because there is no documentation to support his claims. Tim Hebert has all of his Oscar flight commentary now centralized in one blog. It should be required reading for those interested in the debate.

Sheaffer's article prompted Robert Hastings to write a critique of the explanation for the UFO sighting at Oscar flight. Robert had suggested that Mars was the source of the orange light in the sky reported by security guards at Oscar flight. Hastings dismissed this with the usual UFOlogical wave of the hand. He was also critical of Tim Hebert, which prompted Tim to respond in kind. Hastings major source of information is what people tell him and he has gone to great lengths to spin their stories his way while failing to acknowledge the fact that there is very little documentation that supports much of what he has written.

Robert Sheaffer also commented about the second episode of "Close Encounters". This episode involved the Kecksburg UFO crash and the March 13, 1997 Arizona UFO case. Both of these have satisfactory explanations and I had covered the cases in SUN-lite (see issues 3-6, 2-3, 5-3, and 5-4). As always, the producers chose not to involve any skeptics and we are left with inaccurate reporting of what the explanations for these cases were. The Kecksburg program incorrectly stated that astronomers felt it could be explained by a "meteorite". They could not even get their facts right because nobody has ever claimed that a meteorite fell at Kecksburg. Skeptics and astronomers have only stated that what caused the initial sighting was a bright fireball, which was visible from Kecksburg. In the Arizona UFO case, Robert mentions that some witnesses claimed to have psychological contact with the UFO! It is disappointing that this is the same channel that produces programs like "Mythbusters", where facts triumph over myths. Now, they are broadcasting shows, where myths are allowed to override facts.

American viewers will get a chance to watch these episodes on "The Science Channel" starting in March. I find it funny, that it will be broadcast on a channel that is, supposedly, dedicated to science. If it were a real science channel, there would be a follow-up program after the show explaining where the UFOlogists went wrong in their investigations.

Mr. Sheaffer continued to provide us with more UFO commentary when he posted a summary of the 2014 International UFO conference in five parts. The first entry mentioned Stephen Bassett's continuing efforts to achieve "UFO disclosure". Robert reports that Bassett is having monetary problems because he invested the money for his project in Silver! The lesson here is that people who give money to this man, or his organization, should invest it elsewhere. The second posting recounted a "panel" involving Steve Bassett, Timothy Good, John Alexander, and MUFON's Robert Powell. The panel argued if there was an actual UFO cover-up by government(s). Not surprisingly, Bassett and Good promoted the cover-up theory. The third article was highlighted by the evening sky show, where night vision equipment was demonstrated. Robert noted that James McGaha's low light camera, which he demonstrated nearby, was superior to the ones being shown/sold at the conference. In his fourth installment, he mentioned John Alexander, who seems to find some UFO cases very convincing. Among them were the Arizona UFOs, Rendlesham, and Gulf Breeze! IMO, Anybody that can be fooled by the Ed Walters story has to be very gullible or have some financial link to the hoax. The fifth article, was not very extensive but I was appalled to see the National Atomic Testing Museum have a table, where they promoted a UFO connection. One can only assume they are doing this to get people to come to their museum. Is their museum in that much trouble? Robert covered a lot more about the conference than I can mention here. Follow the links to read more about it.

Jasper Copping's missive that appeared in "The Telegraph" made the claim that UFO "enthusiasts" are beginning to think that there may be nothing to all these UFO reports. David Clarke was quoted and he mentioned that somebody should have recorded some convincing footage since so many people have a personal camera readily available. I assume he is talking about cell phones. I have an article about how good this technology is and what it might reveal in a UFO sighting.

Thomas Bullard wrote an article about his "crisis of confidence" in some UFO cases he thought were inexplicable in the January 2014 issue of Paranthropology. He specifically identified three cases, that he felt, skeptics had provided good explanations for. Those cases were the "Phoenix lights" (what I refer to as the "Arizona UFOs"), the "Yukon UFO mothership" (see article in this issue), and the Exeter UFO (He dismisses the explanation that appeared in the Skeptical Inquirer but recognizes that another possibility offered by Martin Shough might explain the event). Bullard's lengthy article goes on to point out what skeptics recognize and UFOlogists seem to have problems accepting. That being that eyewitness testimony is full of potential errors that need to be considered when trying to evaluate what they report. It is well worth a read if you are a skeptic or a UFO proponent.

Dr. Tyler Kokjohn released a video concerning abduction evidence. He points out that the advancements in genetic research can help prove the claims made by abductologists but they choose not to do so.

The Roswell Corner

Still waiting on those slides

The slide story continues to spark interest as we wait for the “big reveal”, which is supposed to happen at a news conference sometime this year. Anthony Bragalia has written to me and whined about how I implied that money was a motivating factor surrounding the slides. To justify his group/the owner accepting money for displaying these slides, he compared it to Phil Klass selling his books. I have no problem with people selling books because people are just presenting their own views (right or wrong). However, I do have a problem with people promoting a potential fraud for money. We don't know if the slides are a hoax but there seems to be a great deal of secrecy about the slides, who has seen them, and where they came from. These are the characteristics of a hoax and it is up to those who are presenting the slides to prove it is not a hoax or something other than what they claim it to be. Will the Roswell team learn from past errors?

Bragalia also stated that it is not a human body and I was sinking to “new lows” by stating that it could be a dead airmen burned by a crash. Once again, he is admitting to having seen the slides because he knows that it is not a dead human body. However, he has refused to answer this question in public forums because he does not want to interfere with the investigation. One thing I want to point out is that, in my last Roswell corner, I stated I was speculating and that I would not be shocked if it was some airman that had been disfigured in a plane crash. I never said that it WAS the case. I still think that Bragalia and his cohorts better be sure of this because it would be very embarrassing if the body/slide was identified to be something other than what they claim it to be.

Meanwhile, Rich Reynolds leaked out a bit more information about what the slide(s) show. According to Rich Reynolds' source, the image shows an alien body inside a building and there is a placard near it. Apparently, nobody has been able to resolve what is written on the placard because it is out of focus. Using a slow speed film like Kodachrome in low light will introduce all sorts of problems involving small depths of field (because of using a wide-open f-stop) and soft focus. One wonders how clear the image of the “body” is if this is the case.

Another item Rich Reynolds leaked out was the location for the great reveal might be in Mexico City but the Roswell investigative team prefers another location. If it is Mexico City, is it possible that Jaimie Maussan has become involved? If so, it might explain a lot and does not really help promote the idea of a proper investigation.

I predict that the slides will appear at the annual Roswell UFO festival amid much fanfare and hoopla.

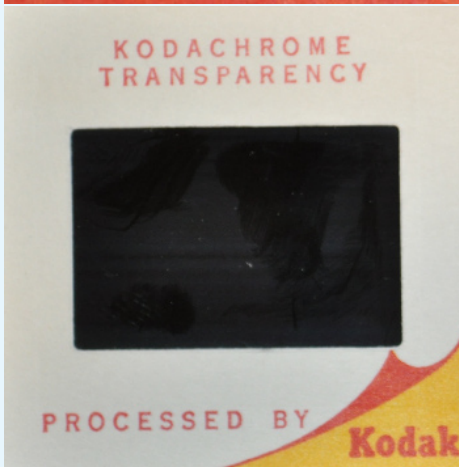
Dating slides

The slide story had me trying to figure out how Kodachrome dated their slide films. My slide collection only went back to 1977, when I purchased my first 35mm camera. Since we are talking about old slide film, I would have to obtain slides from another source. Luckily, ETSY has quite a few individuals willing to sell vintage Kodachrome slides and I was able to purchase several that were dated in 1947-8. Unfortunately, they had been transferred from the cardboard mounts to plastic ones and, in the process, had been trimmed. One did have “Kodak safety film” on the edge of the film but there were no markings whatsoever to indicate the date of the film's manufacture.

After disassembling many of my Kodachromes from 1977 and beyond, I noticed the same issue. There were no edge markings that I could identify. Only the cardboard mounts (and the dates on them) gave away when they were photographed/developed (see below for two samples from 1977 and 1978).



I was about to give up but decided to purchase another batch of slides from ETSY that had cardboard mounts seen in the 1950s and early 1960s. Many were not dated but they were Kodachrome slide mounts. After photographing the slide mounts, I opened several to see what the edge codes revealed. According to film preservation.org, there were several figures (Triangles, circles, crosses, squares) that were used in varying combinations to indicate the year of manufacture for the film. I was a bit confused because several of the slides had edge coding that did not appear to match up with any of those listed. Others had no edge coding whatsoever (like my slides) or the section with the edge coding was not on that slide.

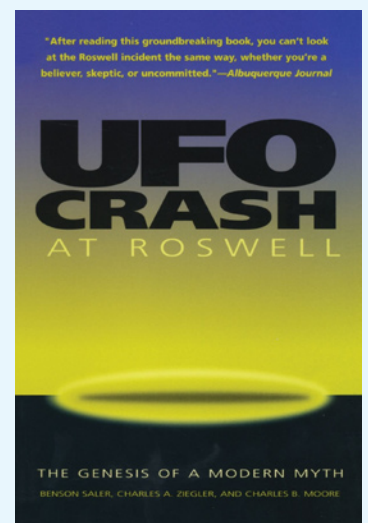


I found three slides (out of about 20) from the recent batch that had some form of edge marking mentioned in the film preservation.org document. They are displayed above. The left slide came from a red cardboard border slide that was from the 1955-1959 time frame (see image to left). However, the edge coding (triangle followed by a square) indicated the film was manufactured in 1944. The middle slide came from another cardboard mount from the 1955-1959 time frame. There is a single triangle between "Safety" and "film". This would indicate a year of manufacture being 1958. However, the double triangle after "film" indicates a year of manufacture being 1941. Which is it? The last example came from a cardboard slide mount that indicated a year of development being 1958-1962 (see image below left). There is a date stamp here imprinted in the cardboard that identifies it was mounted in July of 1959. However, the "double cross" after film does not even appear in the edge coding chart!. Does this mean it was a "single cross"? If so, the year of manufacture was 1949. If not, what year does it signify? We don't know.

What does this all have to do with the Roswell slide(s)? It demonstrates that it will not be easy to determine if the film fits the 1947 time frame. If I am correct on the edge coding with these slides, I would be shocked to see those examining the film that the edge coding was from 1947. It appears that most film had been manufactured a year or more prior to the film's use, development, and mounting. As I mentioned in a previous article, it has been my experience that most store bought slide films (unless they come from professional sources) are not brand new. In 1947, unless one lived near a distributor of the film, I would expect the film to be at least a year or more old. It is my hope that when the slide(s) are released, that full scans of the actual unmounted slide(s) will be displayed. In order to prevent any "photoshop magic", it would be important that the Roswell investigators have an outside source certify that the scan is a legitimate copy of the original. Will the investigative team go the "extra yard" to legitimize their find or will it be presented in a shady manner that raises more questions than it answers? Stay tuned.

There is a "profound truth" to the Roswell myth

I noticed that Rich Reynolds blog implied that skeptics don't understand what a myth is when it comes to Roswell. According to him, a myth has *"an absolute, profound truth"* at its core. I thought that is what skeptics have been saying all along. The "core of truth" to the story is that Mack Brazel picked up debris on the Foster Ranch and gave it to Jesse Marcel Sr., who reported his find to the commander at Roswell Army Air Field. The debris and Marcel was then flown to Fort Worth in a B-29, where it was identified as debris from weather balloon and radar reflector. I don't know of any skeptics, who argue that none of these things occurred. It is from this "truth" that the Roswell myth evolved. Anybody interested in reading how the story evolved from there should just read many of the skeptical arguments I have put forth here in SUNlite or read the book written by Benson Saler, Charles Ziegler, and Charles Moore with the title of "UFO Crash at Roswell: Genesis of a modern myth". Apparently, they think it is a myth as well.



Cell phone cameras: A solution to the UFO problem?

A recent posting by Wendy Christenson on the UFO updates list, before it became defunct, brought some criticism regarding how good cell phone cameras are at recording UFOs. I have to agree with some of those criticisms at how good cell phone cameras really are. They are not designed for imaging distant objects so one wonders if they really could present decent images of “true UFOs” (UFOs that defy any explanation).

Cell phone cameras

Most phones on the market now include a 1.3 to 8 megapixel camera. Each camera is going to be different but most “smart phones” appear to have an average size of around 5 to 8 megapixels. Most of these have “zoom features” but they are not true optical zooms. I normally do not use them as they do not increase the resolution of the image taken. Each cell phone is different and the operator needs to learn how to use the camera effectively. If they can, the cell phone camera can be a useful tool. I use mine quite often to take snapshots but I really never tested to see how well it performed doing other things. Could it record a large object from a distance? Is it possible that a cell phone can record details that might not be visible to the naked eye or is the resolution less?

Resolution tests

I originally thought one could simply photograph a test chart from a fixed distance but then felt that might not be a real test of a cell phone. It would be easier to use the camera under “real” circumstances, which one would expect in a UFO scenario.

My first effort was to take photographs of aircraft flying close to a target that could be measured. There is no easier target than the moon in daylight. It has an average angular size of about 1/2 of a degree. The best time to try this is during first and last quarter when the moon is still bright enough to be seen in daylight but is far enough from the sun’s glare. I had an excellent opportunity when I took a vacation to Orlando, Florida in late January. My location was east of the flight path of planes taking off from McCoy airport and the last quarter moon was very easy to use as a reference. I was using a Samsung S3 cell phone with an 8 megapixel camera.

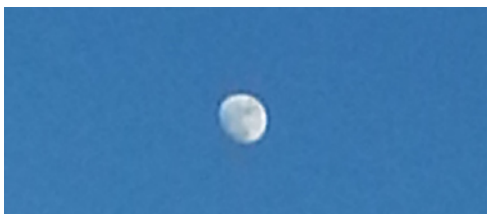


It is clear in this photograph that the aircraft is slightly larger than the moon and can be resolved to show the wings and tail. Most people can identify this object at first glance. I probably could not positively identify the airline or airplane type, but we can definitely see that it is an airplane. This demonstrates that objects about a half-degree in angular size should be identifiable using an 8 megapixel cell phone camera.

After examining this image, I felt that a shot of the moon with my cell phone compared to a shot I took with my old 35mm camera

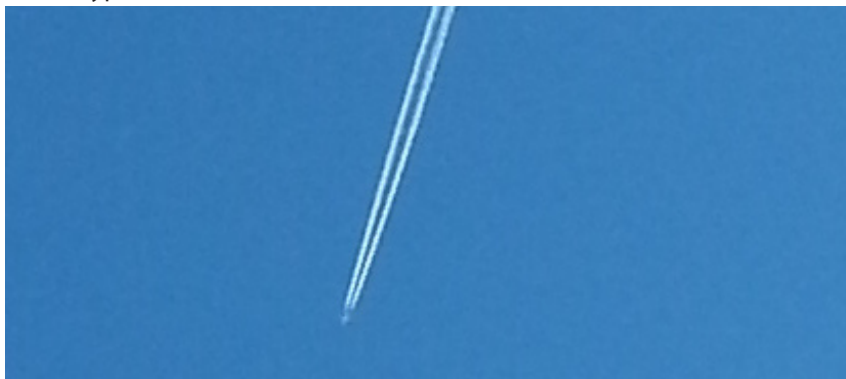


using a 50 mm lens would give me a good example of how well my cell phone camera works. The image to the left was an old Kodachrome shot taken in Chicago in March of 1978. One can barely resolve the maria on the moon and identify the phase. I then took a picture of the moon with a similar moon phase and around the same time of day using a cell phone. The cell phone recorded about the same amount of detail. I suppose that people can quibble about these not being the exact same conditions but what these images demonstrate is that my 8 megapixel cell phone was comparable to a 35mm Single Lens Reflex Camera using Kodachrome film and a standard lens.



I also attempted to take some photographs of a brighter gibbous moon in the evening sky to see if any features could be resolved. I took three images in rapid sequence. One was out of focus as the auto focus feature attempted to refocus in between shots. The other two showed a reasonable image of the moon. The general layout of the maria was visible and one can even see Mare Crisium, which is about four minutes of arc in size. While it is visible, I would not consider it "resolved" to the point it is easily identifiable. It is simply a dark spot against a light background.

To see if I could test the cell phone further, I decided to photograph a more distant aircraft. I photographed a Boeing 757-200 en route to England. According to Flight Aware, it was at 35,000 feet and flying away from me. I took this image when it was at about a 45 degree elevation. With a wingspan of 125 feet, the angular size computes to about 0.2 degrees. One can barely resolve the shape of the plane. I would be hard pressed to positively identify this as an airplane if there were no contrails to give it away. I certainly could not identify the aircraft type.



Based on this information, I think the ability to record details beyond the half-degree angular size is pushing the camera's abilities. Anything smaller than that can be recorded in the image but will not be clearly identifiable. This type of resolution is close to what an individual can see with the naked eye. Smaller objects can be seen with the unaided eye, but they are often difficult to identify because of the inability to see minor details clearly.

Cell phones in the dark.

Cell phone cameras are essentially useless in a dark sky unless the object is pretty bright. I have managed to photograph the moon, Venus (see image to the right), Jupiter, and Sirius but not much more than that. These are snapshots and recording fainter stars is going to require exposures in the seconds and not fractions of a second. Despite this difficulty in recording faint objects, one also has to recognize that most UFO events at night involve bright objects that are readily noticeable to casual observers. Common astronomical IFOs involve bright planets and stars.



One of the biggest problems with night time cell phone photography is that the autofocus feature has problems focusing at infinity. This can result in out of focus objects. Out of nine photographs I took of the moon, three were out of focus. The remaining six were in focus (although a bit blurry due to camera shake) and one could tell the moon was near first quarter (see image to the left). The lesson here is to take as many shots as possible in order to make sure you get one satisfactory image of the object in question.

Another issue I encountered with nocturnal cell phone photography is that the camera will automatically adjust the shutter speed for low light conditions. Moving lights will become streaks just like this photograph of a plane landing at a local airport at night. While the foreground objects appear to show no camera shake, the lights of the plane are streaked.



Cell phones and the Chelyabinsk meteor

Cell phone cameras can provide useful information in a widely observed event. The recent Chelyabinsk daylight fireball produced several cell phone videos showing the debris trail left behind by the fireball. Between the various videos and images taken, one could have used the videos to triangulate the altitude and path of the fireball.

Very few cell phones recorded the actual fireball (see 14:48 in this video to see an actual cell phone video of the fireball). Because of the meteor's short duration (about 15 seconds), most of the videos were recorded by dash cameras in cars and security cameras on buildings. These were already active and just happened to be pointed in the correct direction. However, many cell phones did record the arrival of the shock wave from the explosion as they recorded the debris trail in the sky. This happened roughly between two and a half to three minutes after the fireball was seen. In an on-line YOUTUBE video documenting the sonic booms recorded by cell phones, there were two videos showing about 90 seconds of footage before the sound of the explosion arrived. Others had lesser time frames before recording the effects. This indicates that cell phones were active and in use between one and three minutes after the initial event. The time lapse probably had to do with the witnesses getting over the shock of what they had seen, retrieving their cell phone, and activating/using the video feature.

How well will a cell phone record a real UFO event?

The Chelyabinsk meteor gives us some insight into how a major UFO event visible to a large enough population might be recorded using cell phones. The event would be initially seen by the witnesses and within a minute or two, they would begin to try recording the event. Some may find a minute or two too late but that is not what Project Blue Book Special Report number 14 indicates. According to that document, almost half of the "unknowns" had a time duration over a minute in length. Half of this number lasted over five minutes! It appears that many cases involving "true UFOs" last long enough that somebody might record it using a cell phone if conditions were adequate to record it (The 2006 O'Hare UFO case lasted, by witness estimates, around one to five minutes).

A UFO-like event occurred for me when I was stopped at a traffic light. I noticed a helium balloon from the local car dealership had gotten loose and was drifting away with the wind. It was visible for only about a minute. Despite this short time frame to take my phone out and activate the camera feature, I still managed to record it with my cell phone camera before it drifted too far away (see image to the right).

In another instance, I had walked outside and heard a jet approaching. It sounded low and I withdrew my cell phone and took three shots as the plane arced overhead. One can easily identify the plane type and the airline colors. The entire event lasted about one minute and I was able to successfully record it.

This brings up the question if it is possible that a cell phone camera might be able to clearly record a “true UFO”. This depends on the size of the UFO and the distance it is away from the observer. The physical size of a UFO varies between events. Some report them about the size of a fighter jet (about 30-40 feet in size). Others claim to have seen UFOs as big as Aircraft Carriers! The problem with all these size estimates is they are not very reliable. If you are looking at an object that is, by definition, “unknown”, you can’t really determine its size without a point of reference.



Since we know that a cell phone will record objects as bright as Venus with a quick snap shot and can resolve down to about the size of the moon, we can estimate how well a cell phone might perform in a UFO scenario. For various UFO craft sizes, we can see how far away the UFO has to be before it becomes nothing more than a blob or a speck.

UFO size (ft)	30	60	120	240	480
Distance angular diameter = 1/2 degree	3438 feet	6875 feet	13751 feet	27502 feet	55004 feet

Based on this, we should be able to resolve a UFO that is “hovering” at a distance of just over a half-mile from the observer if it was only a small “scout” craft. However, if it were a “mothership”, it should be resolvable at much greater distances! One must recall that witnesses often state that they saw their UFOs “up close”. If UFOs are being seen “up close” (less than 1000 feet), then such events should be recorded adequately using a cell phone camera.

Cell phones and UFO research

I don’t think it really is possible to do serious research of UFOs with JUST a cell phone. Most record about as much information as snapshots taken on 35mm film when used properly. It is the operator that will have a lot to say about how good the images turn out. That being said, the abundance of cell phones does increase the likelihood of a “true UFO” event being recorded by multiple cell phone cameras from different locations.

Some UFO proponents have concluded that something like 20-30% of all UFO reports can not be explained. If this is true, then there are about 60-270 “true UFO” sightings each month (Based on a average of 300-900 reports/month made to NUFORC database). Even if we use the more conservative value of 10%, we still have 30-90 each month and this is only the UFO events that are actually seen/ reported! That is over one per day and, with a significant number of the population owning these cell phones, it would only be a matter of time before a “true UFO” will be recorded by an individual who happens to have their cell phone available and knows how to use it.

The big question continues to be, “Why hasn’t a cell phone recorded a UFO event that defies explanation?” The lack of any good cell phone imagery (or RECENT imagery from any type of camera) of “true UFOs” indicates that these kinds of events are not as common as claimed. Can we say that there are no “true UFO” events? No, but with each passing day that they are not convincingly recorded, the possibility they do not exist as a phenomenon increases. Modern camera technology (cell phones being a subset) has progressed to the point that it can help resolve the UFO question. It is time for UFOlogists to “up their game”, obtain the data they claim exists, and prove they are right. What is stopping them?

December 1996 Yukon UFO revisited

With the reincarnation of UFO Updates on Facebook, I noticed that one of the first comments had to do with the Yukon UFO case of 1996, which had been part of the first episode of a UFO series recently produced by Discovery channel Canada. Readers of SUNlite are aware that I announced that this case had been explained by Ted Molczan in SUNlite 4-4 (p. 36) as the re-entry of the rocket body that had launched Cosmos 2335. Robert Sheaffer had also presented the explanation on his blog in April of 2012. The principle investigator, Martin Jasek, and other Canadian UFOlogists were, as best as I could tell, very quiet about the news. Finally, in this facebook discussion, Chris Rutkowski decided to publicly comment on the case. Instead of congratulating Molczan and Harro Zimmer on their analysis, he rejected it because he accepted the subjective testimony of the witnesses over the evidence regarding the rocket body re-entry. Because Rutkowski finds this evidence so compelling, I felt it was important for me to review the case here.

Who is Ted Molczan?

In his commentary, Chris Rutkowski referred to Ted Molczan's as an unnamed "satellite tracker".¹ I found it a bit frustrating to refer to somebody who has a good reputation in the space and astronomical community for computing orbits of satellites and re-entering space debris as just a "satellite tracker". It gives the impression that he really was not qualified to make an evaluation of the case. At least Rutkowski could have identified him by name.

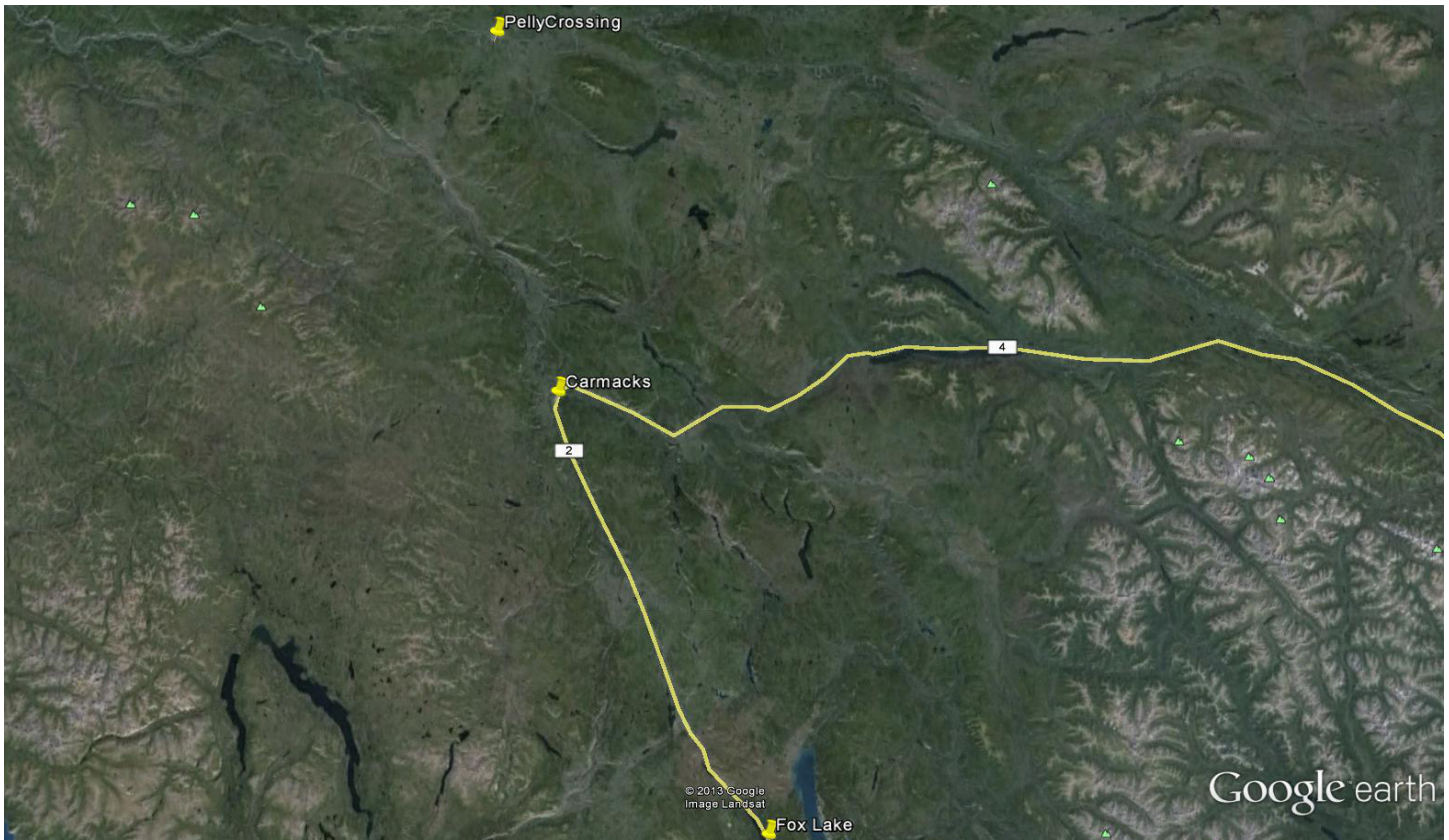
It is too bad that the Discovery channel did not present the explanation for this case in a fair and balanced way. Ted Molczan lives in Toronto and could have been interviewed to present his case. Instead, he had to be a bystander while the program presented Rutkowski and Jasek's one-sided version of events. Chris Rutkowski claims to have mentioned it in his interview but down played it with the claim that the witnesses precise observations eliminated any such explanation.

An instant classic

The principle investigator for this case is Martin Jasek, who collected all the reports from the witnesses over two years after the event had actually occurred. His conclusion was that they saw a huge mothership UFO.² The case was so widely promoted, that it was considered one of the top ten UFO cases by UFOlogists for Paul Kimball's "Best evidence" film.

The event occurred on the night of December 11th of 1996 and was visible in the remote northwestern province of Canada called the Yukon Territory. Jasek's witnesses were all located along the road running from Whitehorse to Pelly Crossing called the Klondike Highway. The straight line distance from the most southern location to the most northern location was something like 120 miles.

In an apparent effort to organize all the sightings, Jasek separated them into three concentrations. There were seven witnesses at Pelly Crossing in the far north. In the mid-point of the highway, at Carmacks, there were nine witnesses. Finally, there were six witnesses on the southern end near Whitehorse at Fox Lake.



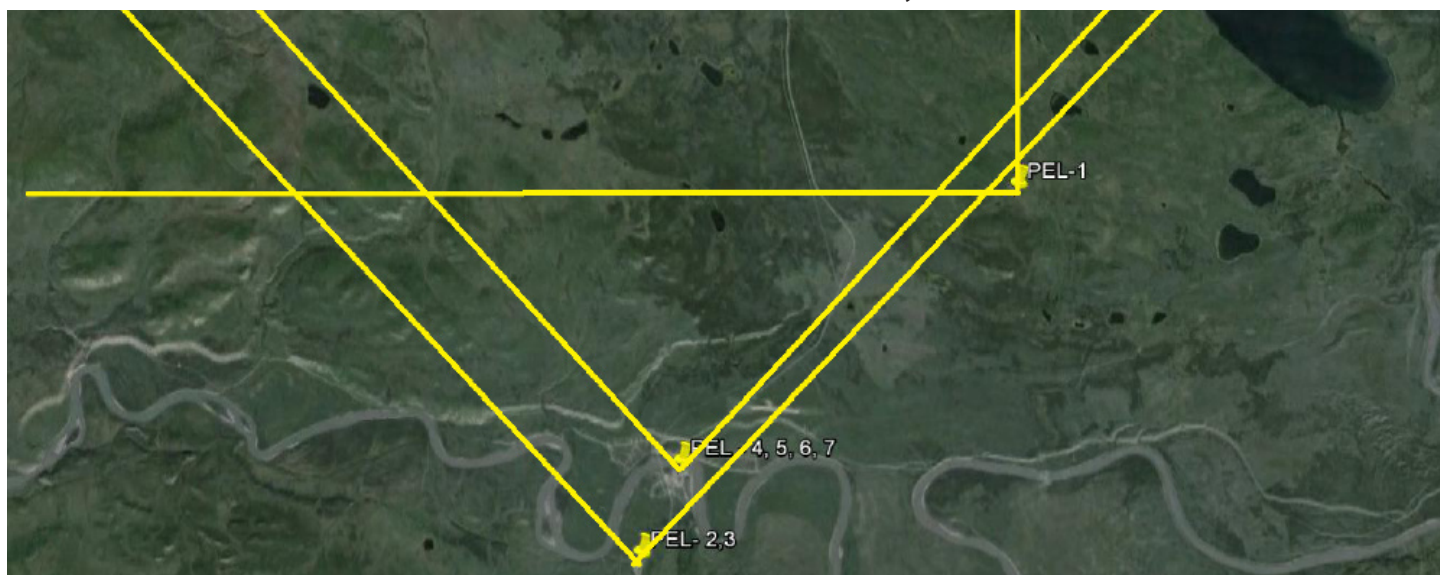
The Pelly Crossing sightings

Pelly Crossing is a small village located on the Pelly River. The population is only a few hundred people and it is quite remote. Out of this small population, Martin Jasek was able to discover seven people, who saw the UFO. He identified them with the designation of PEL followed by a number since many did not want their names made public.

PEL1, identified as Don Trudeau, was located off the highway in the woods to the northeast of Pelly Crossing. He was tending a trap line and estimated that he saw the event between 8 and 9 PM.³ Mr. Trudeau reports seeing the object in the west and it appeared to react to his flashlight. It came towards him. After he covered his flashlight, the object moved slowly to his right. It emitted a beam as it moved. The duration of the sighting was estimated to be four minutes.

PEL2 and 3 were together in the same car and driving north on the highway. PEL2 referred to it as *"whole big cluster of stars moving!"*⁴ According to PEL3, they pulled off the road near a gravel pit and watched the UFO slowly fade away, *"some lights started to go out before the others"*⁵ PEL2 confirmed this by stating that each of the lights extinguished in rapid succession. The trajectory was from West to East and PEL2 saw it pass below the big dipper. He even included a sketch of the UFO showing the direction of flight in relation to this well known star pattern. According to PEL2, he arrived home around 9:10 PM. Working backward, they determined the time of the sighting as 9:00PM.

PEL4, 5, 6, and 7 were taking a course at a local college and came out for their break about 8:30 PM.⁶ They noticed the formation of lights in the northwest and saw it traverse the sky towards the northeast. The object was at a low angular elevation according to PEL 5 and 6. However, PEL 7 thought the object was much higher and closer to a 45 degree angle of elevation. While PEL 5 and 6 stated the event lasted about 3 minutes, PEL 7 (who was with them) estimated it to be more like five or ten minutes. Witnesses PEL 5, 6 and 7 also heard that witnesses in Dawson (about 120 miles to the northwest) and Mayo (about 60 miles to the NNE) also saw the UFO.



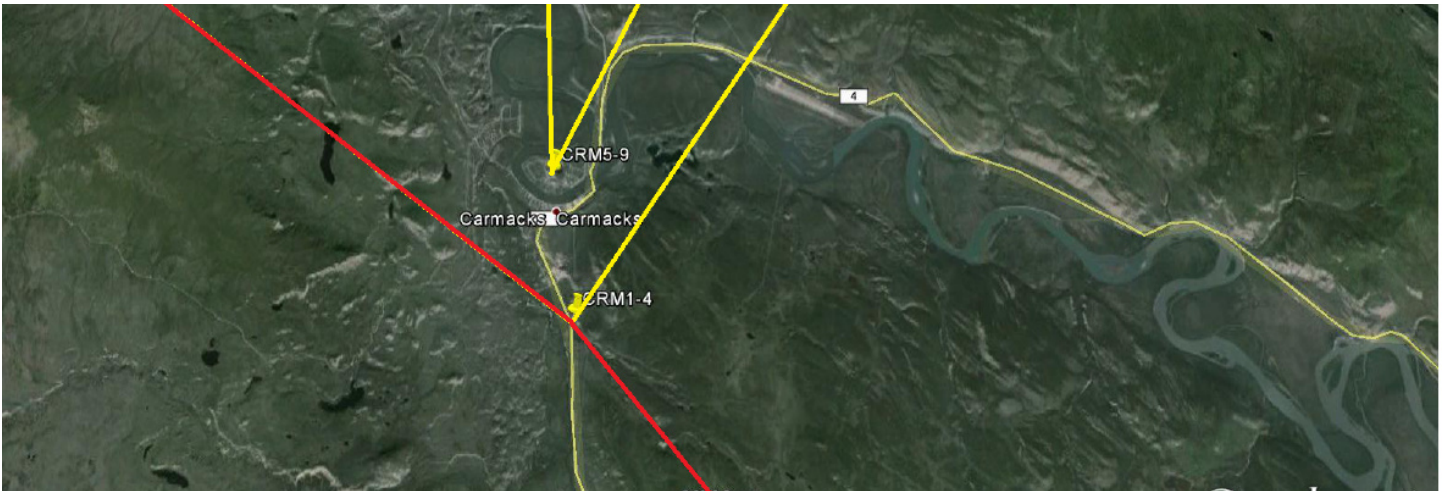
Witnesses at Pelly Crossing and sighting lines based on the descriptions given

The Carmacks concentration

A little more than halfway between Fox Lake and Pelly crossing, is the village of Carmacks. The population for this town is not much greater than Pelly. Jasek discovered nine witnesses here but this large number is misleading. Four of the witnesses were all in the same vehicle. The other five involve a single family, where three of the witnesses were small children.

CRM1 through 4 were driving north along the highway when they saw the UFO appear.⁷ The driver (CRM2) stopped the car and they all got out to see the UFO move from the northwest to northeast. According to witness CRM1, the UFO, which was a dark shape behind the lights, then went to the east and headed south. The time of observation, according to him, was at 7:00 PM. CRM2 stated the lights were visible for around ten minutes and reported that they only moved from NW to NE. He estimated the angular size as being approximately 60 degrees. CRM2 also stated they went towards the airstrip to the northeast of town to see if the UFO had landed there. Witness CRM3 gave no time and did not say anything to Jasek but did talk to another investigator. Jasek could not interview witness CRM4.

The remaining five witnesses CRM5-9 were a family of five.⁸ The father had seen the lights through a northeast window moving left to right. It moved slowly and was low (near treetop level). It consisted of a row of lights that went out as it moved to the right. While CRM5 stated his sighting was initially between 9 and 10PM, he adjusted his sighting time to just after 7PM after talking to investigators and his brother, witness CRM2.



Witnesses at Carmacks and sighting lines based on descriptions given. The red line are the observations of CRM1 while the yellow ones are the observations of CRM2.

Observations at Fox lake

The witnesses at Fox Lake were all in cars driving north. Their locations are based on what they remember and not what was recorded at the time.

FOX1 was driving north and, as he approached the southern end of the lake, he saw a bright light to the north-northwest.⁹ He drove the length of the lake but noticed nothing unusual about the light. On the northern side of Fox lake, after a car and a semi-trailer had passed by him going southbound, he suddenly noticed that the light was now three rows of lights moving eastward in front of him. They disappeared behind the hill to the right of the road and he lost sight of them. No specific time was listed in Jasek's description but he gave a time range of between 7:45 and 8:15 PM.

FOX2 and FOX3 were in two separate cars driving north along the lake.¹⁰ They were traveling together with FOX2 being a mile or so ahead of FOX3. FOX2 saw the UFO "hovering" over the lake. He stopped the car. FOX3 also stopped his car south of FOX2. FOX2 reported the UFO approached him, passed over his head, and then proceeded eastward over the hill. FOX3 reported seeing the UFO approach FOX2 and pass over him in an eastward direction. FOX3 noted the time as between 8:25 and 8:30 PM. While they stated that they had stopped their cars when interviewed by Jasek, it is important to point out that FOX3 in his account written a month after the event stated he did not stop his car even though he wanted to do so.¹¹ FOX2 and 3 then drove up the road a short distance to a campground, where they discussed what they saw.



Witnesses at Fox lake and sighting lines based on the descriptions given

Further to south were witnesses FOX 4 and 5. They saw the UFO as it passed over the lake. Like a majority of the other witnesses, they noted that the direction of travel from left (west/northwest) to the right (east/northeast). FOX 5 recalled looking at the car's

clock (one of the few witnesses, who seemed to think about noting the actual time) and remembered it as 8:23PM.¹²

The mothership conclusion

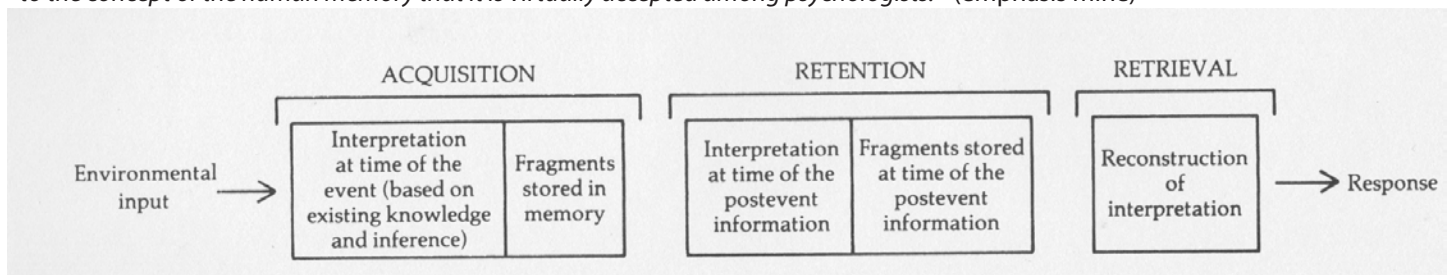
Based on what the witnesses told him, Martin Jasek drew the conclusion that a massive UFO was flying across the Klondike Highway that night at low altitude.¹³ Since the UFO was determined by his calculations to be very low in altitude, it would be impossible for the witnesses to all see the same UFO at the same time. If we accept Jasek's conclusion as the correct one, then there were either multiple UFO motherships flying from west to east that night or there was just one such UFO making multiple passes from west to east. In the single mothership theory, one has to assume that the UFO was able to move back towards the west and not be seen by anybody on the highway so it could then put itself into position further south/north along the highway to repeat another west to east pass.

Jasek accepts the sighting data from the witnesses as being very accurate. He uses this subjective data to compute altitudes and object size that appears to match what the witnesses described. However, there are some issues that he chose not to mention or consider in his analysis.

How good are the eyewitness reports?

While Jasek presents a rather impressive array of witnesses, there are some important factors that need to be considered here regarding eyewitness testimony. One of the world's top experts on such testimony is Elizabeth Loftus, who wrote the book, *Eyewitness testimony*, in 1979. Despite being over thirty years old, the book is still relevant. In her book, Loftus states:

When we experience an important event, we do not simply record that event in memory as a videotape recorder would. The situation is more complex. Nearly all of the theoretical analyses of the process divide it into three stages...First, there is the ACQUISITION stage--the perception of the original event-- in which information is encoded, laid down, or entered into a person's memory system. Second, there is the RETENTION stage, the period of time that passes between the event and the eventual recollection of a particular piece of information. Third, there is the RETRIEVAL stage during which a person recalls stored information..This three-stage analysis is so central to the concept of the human memory that it is virtually accepted among psychologists.¹⁴ (emphasis mine)



In the acquisition phase, the witness sees the event and interprets it based on their own knowledge/ beliefs. Elizabeth Loftus describes this problem with “expectations”:

*Some psychologists believe that expectations cause a real change in what a person perceives....other psychologists believe that our expectations do not affect perception itself but rather they affect how we interpret what we have seen, or how we respond to what we have see. Whichever of these theories is correct (and there is some possibility that both may be true in part), one thing is clear and accepted by all. **Expectations have an enormous impact on what a person claims to have seen.***¹⁵(emphasis mine)

Did any of the witnesses have preconceived notions about what a UFO should look like. Writing in the Condon report, Dr. William Hartmann noticed this problem when evaluating the reports written by witnesses regarding the observations of the Zond IV re-entry:

*Reports of a “cigar-shape” apparently stem from a subjective tendency to connect the string of sources and **from popularization of this concept in the UFO literature.** This important phenomenon I will call the “airship effect;” it is demonstrably present even in reports as far back as 1913.....*¹⁶ (emphasis mine)



In July of 1996, the movie “Independence day” made it into the theaters. The alien spaceships in this film were massive objects. Is it possible that knowledge about the film and its huge spaceships might have had an effect on how the witnesses interpreted what they saw?

In his MUFON journal article (February 2000), Jasek reports that they did not start interviewing witnesses until February 1999.¹⁷ This is over two years after the actual event and brings up another point raised by Loftus regarding eyewitness testimony. The retention stage can result in changes in what a witness remembers.

When a witness perceives a complex event, a number of factors, such as the exposure time, or the salience of the event, or the witness's prior expectations, will affect the accuracy of what is perceived and stored in memory. But to compound the problem once the material

has already been encoded, further changes can take place. The time between a complex experience and a witness's recollections of that experience is a crucial period. **Both the length of this retention interval and the events that take place during it affect a witness's testimony.** ..It is by now a well-established fact that **people are less accurate and complete in their eyewitness accounts after a long retention interval than a short one.**¹⁸ (emphasis mine)

Another factor not considered/mentioned by Jasek is that many of the witnesses were together at the time of the sighting. They were not independent of each other. Some of them were related and talked to each other afterwards. Loftus mentions the effects of such post event discussions:

*Time alone does not cause the slippage of memory. It is caused in part by what goes on during that passage of time. Often after witnessing an important event, one is exposed to new information about it.....***Postevent information can not only enhance existing memories but also change a witness's memory and even cause nonexistent details to become incorporated into a previously acquired memory.**¹⁹ (emphasis mine)

Two of the principle witnesses presented by Jasek are the witnesses FOX2 and FOX3. They were used for a critical triangulation effort to determine the size of the UFO. However, both FOX 2 and 3 discussed what they had seen immediately after the event. FOX 3 was sure that the UFO passed directly over FOX2 in the statement he had written a month later. How much of an effect did this have with FOX2's description TWO YEARS later? The angle of elevation for his UFO could change from a low elevation to directly overhead.

It is important for those defending this case as an alien spaceship to understand the quality of the evidence they are presenting. What Elizabeth Loftus states in her book should be "required reading":

During the time between an event and a witness's recollection of that event -- a period often called the "retention interval" -- the bits and pieces of information that were acquired through perception do not passively reside in memory waiting to be pulled out like fish from water. Rather, they are subject to numerous influences. External information provided from the outside can intrude into the witness's memory, as can his own thoughts, and both can cause dramatic changes in his recollections.

*People's memories are fragile things. It is important to realize how easily information can be introduced into memory, to understand why this happens, and to avoid it when it is undesirable.*²⁰

Relying on eyewitness testimony as the sole evidence for drawing conclusions regarding this event is fraught with the possibility of mistakes.

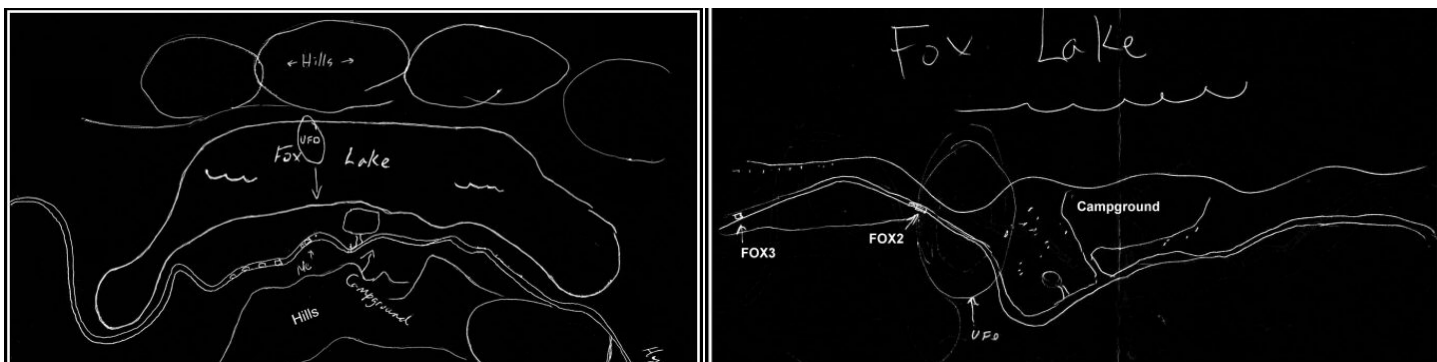
The skeptical viewpoint

While Jasek interprets the eyewitness testimony as being rock solid, skeptics look at it as less reliable. They are not stating that the witnesses are lying but suggest that the testimony has potential errors that need to be considered when evaluating what was seen.

One of the problems with Jasek's eyewitness testimony is the question of time. While some recalled a specific time, others seemed to not think of looking at the clock or their watch. The Pelly crossing witnesses give a time range of between 8 and 9 PM. Probably the best time frame is given by the witnesses who were in class and had just gone on break, which was scheduled for 8:30 PM. The Carmacks witnesses are tied to two different time frames. CRMS1 said the time was at 7PM but CRMS5 originally thought it was between 9 and 10 PM. All we can gather is that the time range probably encompassed between 7 and 10PM. The median time for this is 8:30PM. The Fox lake witness were consistent except for FOX 1, who gave a time frame of 7:45-8:15. If we assume a margin for error (remember this is based on two year old memories), we can assume that he probably saw the same event and it was the same 8:30PM time reported by the other Fox Lake witnesses.

The direction described by the witnesses is reasonably consistent with a few exceptions. All mention the direction of travel being eastward and seeing the object to the north of them. Because a majority of the witnesses were driving north on a road, they had a ready reference point from which to determine direction. There were some witnesses that gave directions that were slightly different. My experience from examining fireball reports has shown that there are often reports that are not consistent with the others and are usually a result of an individual being confused about direction or having memories that are not quite accurate. Considering the fact that they were reported two years later, these kinds of errors are not that surprising. Ignoring these potential errors can result in improper calculations and inaccurate conclusions.

Jasek spends a great deal of time trying to calculate the size and altitude of the UFOs reported up and down the highway using these observations of direction. In the case of the Pelly crossing sighting, he relies heavily on the Don Trudeau observations to make the UFO appear close to the observers in his calculations. However, Mr. Trudeau was not on the road and was in the middle of the woods on a trail. He did not have the ready reference of where north was located. Add to this that he was telling his story years later under the influence of a UFO investigator and there is a potential for error. If his initial observation was actually to the northwest instead of due west, the true position of the UFO, based on all the observations, is much farther away from the observers than estimated. There is reason to suspect that this was the case when one examines all the observations (Carmacks/Pelly Crossing/Fox lake) as an observation of the same event. They all could not see the same object close up at the same time over a distance of over a hundred miles.



The observations of FOX 2 and 3 appears to be the prize rebuttal being presented by Jasek/Rutkowski. They have selected the observation by FOX 2, who stated the UFO passed overhead, to demonstrate the UFO was close and not far away. FOX2 gave sketches based on two-year old memories. In figures 7 and 8 he drew his location and where he thought the UFO was located relative to his position.

It is interesting to point out that, In Figure 7 (right)²¹, the car is located after the turn but in figure 8 (left)²² is before the turn. Does this imply that he did not stop his car as he claimed or can't he remember where he was located? More importantly, looking at figure 7 closely, we see that FOX2 drew the UFO not directly above him but that he was on the southern edge of the UFO body. The main body of the UFO was in front of him. This indicates the UFO was not directly overhead as he claimed but at a lower angle of elevation.

During the Condon study, the problem with angles of elevation estimates by witnesses was identified:

*The angular elevation, or apparent location above the horizon, of objects is generally not estimated very accurately at all. The difference from 0° or from 90° of angles near the horizon or near the zenith tends to be substantially overestimated. Anything that is more than 45° or even 30° above the horizon is often reported as overhead.*²³

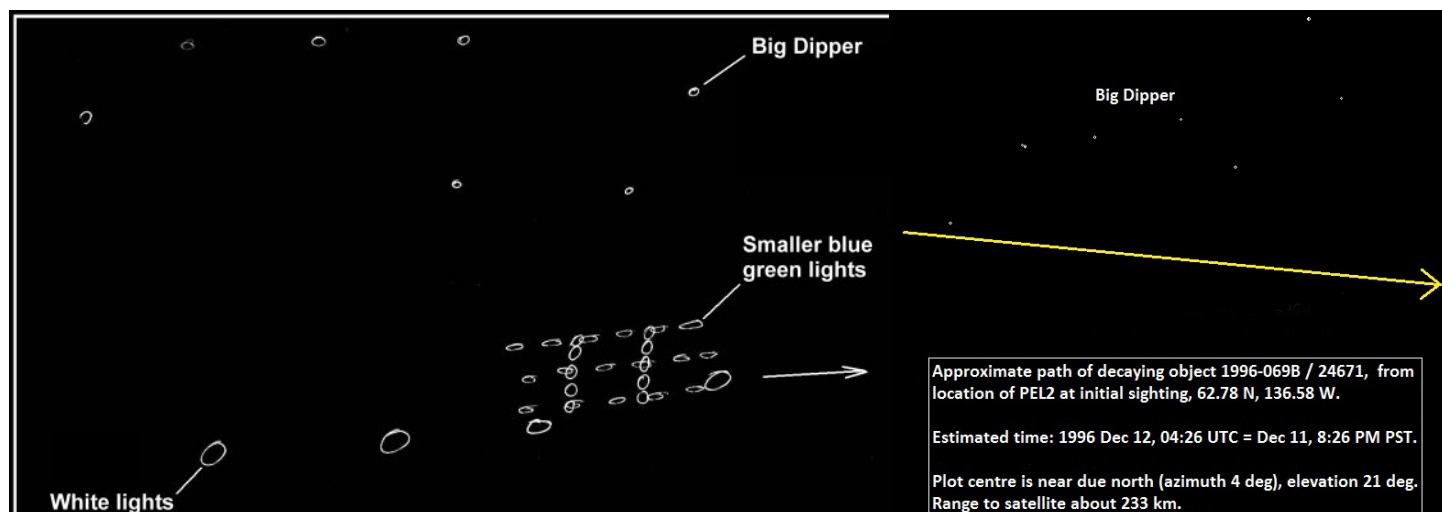
One can see this problem with the Pelly crossing witnesses. Three witnesses saw the same event. Two, PEL5 and 6, saw the object as low on the horizon. However, PEL 7 gave a much higher angle of elevation. This was in disagreement with all the other observations made by other witnesses in the area.

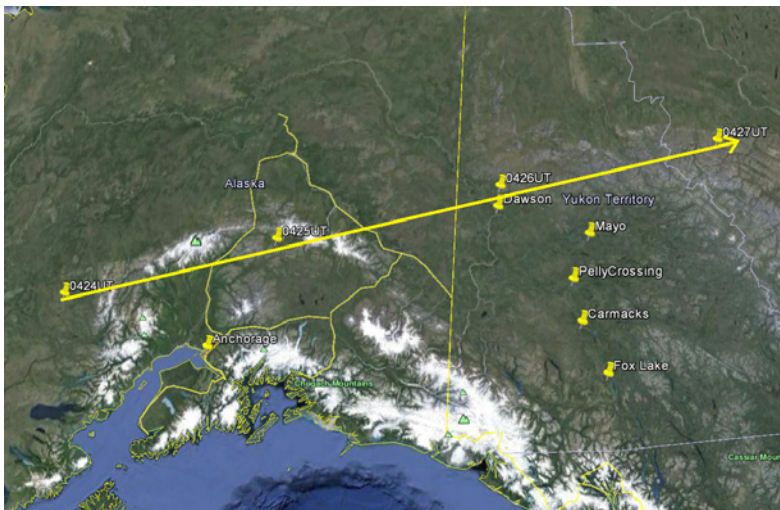
Based on the sketches, time span that had elapsed between the event and the report, the potential influence of FOX 3, and the potential for gross error in estimating the angle of elevation, it appears the FOX2/FOX3 triangulation argument is not a very reliable measurement that can be used to establish the true location and altitude of this UFO.

If we assume that all of the witnesses up and down the highway saw the same UFO over the same time period and in the same position in the sky, we come to the conclusion that what was visible was not very close at all. It would have to have been very high in actual altitude and quite a distance away from the observers.

The explanation

It was Ted Molczan and Harro Zimmer who broke open this case in 2012. They had identified that it was possible that the booster rocket that had launched Cosmos 2335, less than 24 hours earlier, might have re-entered over Alaska and Northwestern Canada. Using the last set of Two line elements for the rocket body and special software, a potential track was computed. It was a very good match for the path across the sky many of the witnesses reported. It started in the northwest for all the observation points and moved towards the northeast. The sketch made by witness PEL2²⁴ (below left) of the UFO and the big dipper was a very close approximation as to the computed trajectory created by Molczan²⁵ (below right).





Harro Zimmer's calculated positions of the re-entering rocket body for December 12, 1996 (times and date are UT).²⁶

The rocket body re-entry also explains how all the witnesses saw something very similar from so many different locations over a wide area. Most reported an easterly motion coming from the west or northwest low in the sky. Those witnesses who reported something slightly different (high angles of elevation, directions/trajectories indicating bizarre motion) could very well have been inaccurate due to mistaken perceptions created during the acquisition stage or altered memories created in the retention phase.

Re-entry events perceived as UFOs

Space debris re-entries have been a UFO report generator since the early days of the space age. When Sputnik 2 re-entered in April of 1958, it produced UFO reports. One of the most famous occurred on March 3rd, 1968. The debris from Zond IV had re-entered the Earth's atmosphere over the eastern United States and produced many reports to project Blue Book. Several of the witnesses had

allowed their preconceptions of what a UFO looked like to produce a craft with windows, when all that was visible was points of light against a dark sky.

Several other cases have produced very similar UFO reports:

December 31, 1978 - UK - cosmos 2068 rocket

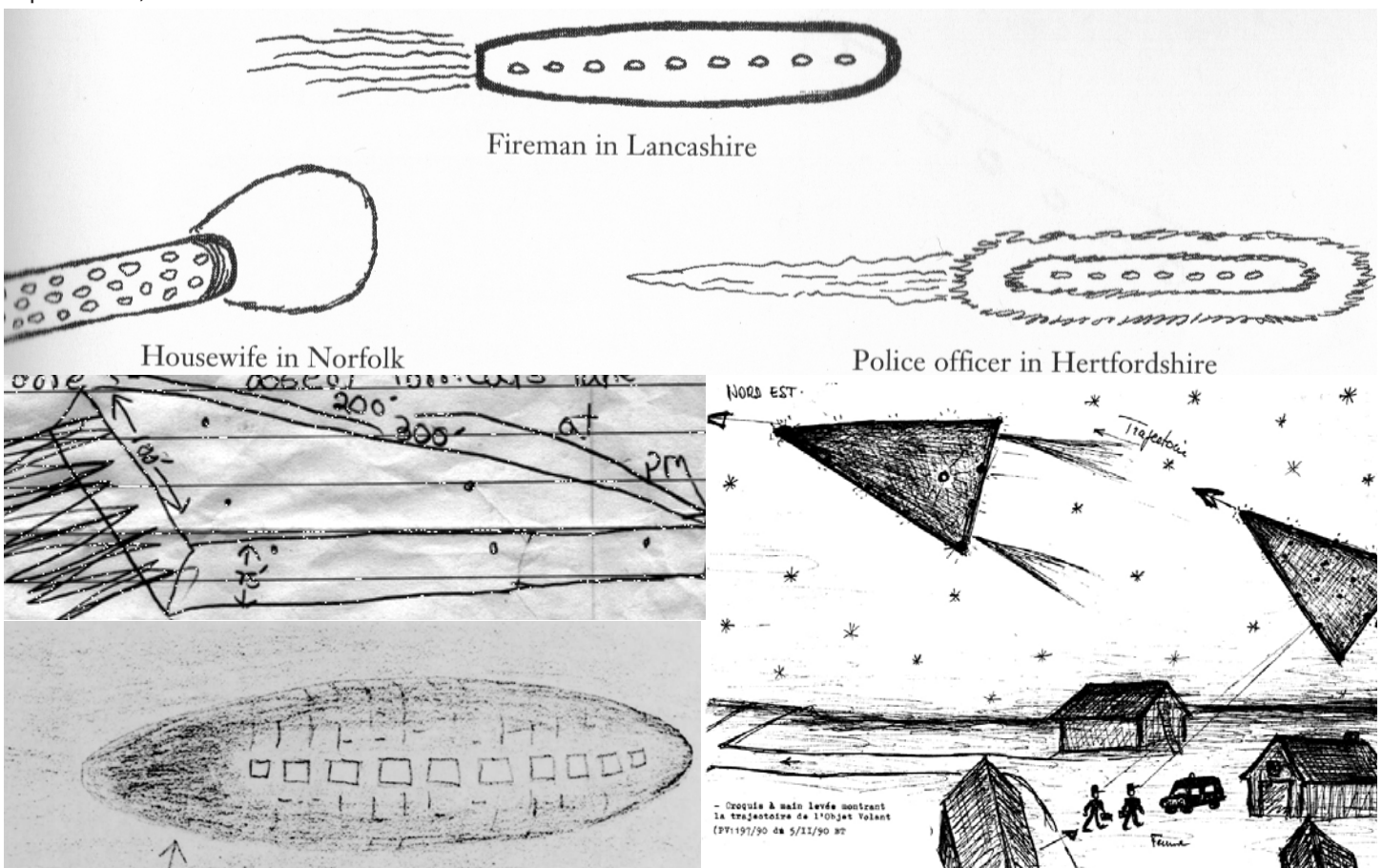
November 5, 1990 - Western Europe - Gorizont 21 rocket body

March 30-31, 1993 - UK - cosmos 2238 rocket

November 14, 1997 - Northwestern US - Proton K rocket

September 1, 1999 - Northwestern US - Proton K rocket

September 7, 1999 - Florida - Proton K rocket



Images of various space debris reentries misinterpreted as UFOs. Top: December 31, 1978 Cosmos 2238 rocket.²⁷ Left middle: September 1, 1999 Proton K Rocket. Left bottom: March 3, 1968. Zond IV²⁸ Bottom right: November 5, 1990 Gorizont 21 rocket.²⁹

Many of these produced rather bizarre descriptions of massive objects with lights. The November 5, 1990 case is particularly interesting because the witnesses were subjected to a Rorschach test of sorts. Just about any shape imaginable was sketched by the witnesses.³¹

How re-entering space debris is reported has been recorded for many decades. Sometimes, the event is simply recorded as a bright fireball because it behaves like one. However, when the debris is large enough to break up and spread out over many degrees of sky, witnesses begin to perceive the lights as being connected to some dark object. When this occurs, UFO reports appear in large numbers.

The missing witnesses

An important characteristic of UFO sightings that Dr. Hartmann noticed about the Zond IV case was something he referred to as the "Excitedness effect":

*An effect important to the UFO problem is demonstrated by the records: the excited observers who thought they had witnessed a very strange phenomenon produced the most detailed, longest, and most misconceived reports, but those who by virtue of experience most nearly recognized the nature of the phenomenon became the least excited and produced the briefest reports. The "excitedness effect" has an important bearing on the UFO problem. It is a selection effect by which the least accurate reports are made more prominent (since the observer becomes highly motivated to make a report), while the most accurate reports may not be recorded.*³²

If there were observers, who saw this as an alien spaceship, were there observers who saw this as a meteor or space debris re-entry? Since it was two years later, it is unlikely that Jasek would have encountered anybody who remembered this as an astronomical event unless they were an astronomer. These observers probably would be unable to recall the date even though it was quite the spectacular event. Despite the lack of any witnesses from Jasek, who thought it was a meteor, there are hints that some people identified this as a meteor or re-entry. In the film produced about the Yukon UFO with the title, "It came from the heavens", a witness named Jean VanBibber said she talked to a Royal Canadian Mountain Police (RCMP) the next day. He apparently saw the event but had come to a different conclusion about what he had observed:

*I went to the post office and...the next day and I saw the RCMP there and I told him, I said, well, I saw that big UFO that flew over yesterday... last night. And he said, that was no UFO, that was a meteor breaking up...*³³

Additionally, Jasek provides no newspaper reports from December 12 or 13, 1996. The media might have recorded the event during that time period as something like a meteor and not like an alien spaceship. Examining the newspaper archive, I found one report from Alaska that indicated the object was not an alien spaceship.³³

Daily Sitka Sentinel, Sitka, Alaska, Thursday, December 12, 1996, Page 5

Meteors Light Up Skies

ANCHORAGE (AP) — Two meteors streaking across the nighttime sky Wednesday were part of a meteor shower viewed by hundreds of residents around the state, astronomers said.

Phones started ringing at the Anchorage Police Department, National Weather Service and local airport towers after two balls of light flashed from west to east in the northern sky at about 8 p.m.

Expect more, said Neal Brown, an astronomer and retired University of Alaska Fairbanks professor.

Wednesday's show was most likely part of the "Geminids" meteor shower the Earth passes through every December. The shower is expected to peak Friday, with about 50 meteors an hour zooming through the atmosphere at 20 miles per second, Brown said.

About 10 to 15 meteors an hour were speeding through the sky Wednesday, Brown said, but only the brightest were visible.

The shower was spotted by pilots all over the state, said Gordon Gruber, an air traffic control supervisor in Anchorage. Pilots reported seeing groups

of four meteors at a time.

"It's a meteor shower!" is how an employee at the Anchorage International Airport tower answered the phone Wednesday night. Pilots, motorists and even the Police Department had been calling the tower, supervisor Brian Snyder said.

Pilots flying at 20,000 feet spotted meteors zipping above them, he said.

Witnesses to the pair above Anchorage said one meteor traveled slightly behind and below the other, and broke into smaller pieces and disappeared as the other continued on. Both had long tails of bluish white light.

The next shower will happen in January with the "Quadrantids," which has 40 meteors an hour at its peak, Brown said.



While the article mentions many meteors that night, it also mentions two balls of light, seen by many observers, that were moving from west to east in the northern sky at about 8PM. They wrongfully attributed this to the Geminid meteor display when it sounds

more like the rocket body re-entry.

No explanation, other than an alien spaceship, is ever good enough

The UFOlogical response to the Molczan explanation is an example of “to the last man” defense often found in “classic” UFO case discussions. Instead of acknowledging the possibility that the explanation has merit or providing a valid counterargument demonstrating that the calculations by Zimmer/Molczan were inaccurate, Jasek retreats to the standard UFOlogical position of assuming the eyewitness “knew what they saw”. He has chosen to ignore what is known about how satellite entries can be misinterpreted and the issues associated with eyewitness testimony. Instead, Jasek selectively chose subjective measurements based on two year-old memories to convince himself that it was not a re-entering rocket booster. This approach ignores the bulk of the testimony that suggests the object was much further away and higher in altitude. Most importantly, Jasek/Rutkowski ignore the fact that this re-entry did occur about the same time the witnesses (especially at Fox Lake and Pelly Crossing) reported seeing their massive UFO but failed to see the actual re-entry! Either it was an incredible coincidence that the UFO was passing through the sky the same way and at the same time the re-entry occurred OR they simply misinterpreted the re-entry as a UFO.

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The 701 club

Case number 1124: April 17, 1952

Don Berliner's list describes it as follows:

April 17, 1952; Longmeadow, Massachusetts. 8:30 p.m. Witnesses: S.B. Brooks, chemical engineer J.A. Eaton. One round, deep orange object flew fast and erratic, occasionally emitting a shaft of light to the rear during a 40 minute sighting.¹

Looking at the summary, one would expect that something that "flew fast" would not be visible for forty minutes! The forty minute time frame and time of night led me to consider that the potential source of this event was astronomical in nature.

Blue Book Investigation²

The Blue Book record card documents that the observers were two engineers who observed this UFO for forty minutes. It also mentions that the object was like a star but four times as bright as any star. It performed rapid dives and climbs as well as changing its appearance as it gained altitude.

PROJECT 10073 RECORD CARD			
1. DATE 17 Apr 52	2. LOCATION Longmeadow, Mass.		12. CONCLUSIONS ☐ Was Balloon ☐ Probably Balloon ☐ Possibly Balloon
3. DATE-TIME GROUP Local 2030 GMT 0130	4. TYPE OF OBSERVATION ☒ Ground-Visual ☐ Ground-Radar ☐ Air-Visual ☐ Air-Intercept Radar		☐ Was Aircraft ☐ Probably Aircraft ☐ Possibly Aircraft
5. PHOTOS ☐ Yes ☒ No	6. SOURCE 2 engineers		☐ Was Astronomical ☐ Probably Astronomical ☐ Possibly Astronomical
7. LENGTH OF OBSERVATION 40 minutes	8. NUMBER OF OBJECTS 1	9. COURSE erratic	☐ Other ☐ Insufficient Data for Evaluation ☒ Unknown
10. BRIEF SUMMARY OF SIGHTING Star color. Star shape. Rapid climbs and dives.		11. COMMENTS Very erratic. 4x as bright as star. Changed shape as it changed altitude..	

ATIC FORM 329 (REV 26 SEP 52)

Further investigation into the file revealed more information that shed light on the potential culprit. The highlights are³:

1. The object was round
2. The object was deep orange
3. It occasionally emitted a shaft of light out its rear
4. It moved at speeds of over 600mph according to one witness. The other stated it was speeds of over 1000 mph.
5. The object moved erratically as it increased its altitude.
6. The object changed shaped. It became elongated at times and appeared to approach and recede from the observers.
7. The azimuth was reported as 20 degrees but it was also referred to as in the east or towards Boston.
8. One of the observers was a graduate of MIT. Both admitted that they had no training in astronomy or aerodynamics. One noted he had recently read the LIFE magazine article about UFOs.

9. They reported their observations to Westover Air Force Base and continued to observe the object for forty minutes. They went inside with the UFO still present in the sky.

Making sense of the report.

The first issue has to do with the azimuth. it was listed as 20 degrees but the observers also mention it was in the east or towards Boston. The real azimuth to Boston from Longmeadow was about 73 degrees (ENE). The entire sentence reads:

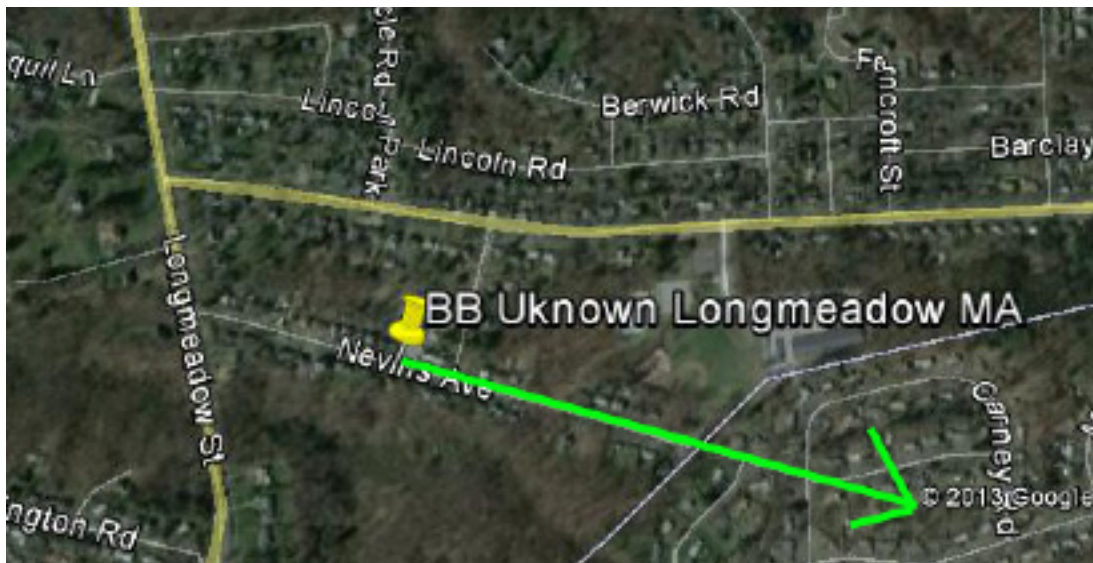
*He could not estimate the altitude of the object, but stated the azimuth from point of observation was approximately 20 degrees; he further estimated the object to be in the vicinity of Boston.*⁴

There may have been confusion in the interview since it started with talking about altitude. Perhaps the 20 degree value was actually an estimated angle of elevation. If we assume this is true, then the object was at 20 degrees elevation and towards the ENE or East. What astronomical object was visible in this location of the sky?



There are two candidates that might fit the bill on this case. Arcturus was at azimuth of 96 degrees and 37 degrees elevation. However, a more interesting candidate was the planet Mars. Unfortunately, its azimuth was 116 degrees (ESE) at 2030 local time. Is it possible that the witnesses might have been mistaken about the direction they saw the object?

The name of the road, on which they lived, is hard to read in the documentation. However, it appears to read that they lived on Nevins Avenue in Longmeadow. If they were using their road as a compass direction for east, they would have been looking at an azimuth of roughly 109 degrees and not 90 degrees. This might explain why they thought they were looking towards Boston when they were actually looking ESE.



Assuming this was the case, Mars suddenly becomes a viable solution to this case. The descriptions given for the UFO moving erratically, coming and going, and changing shape is the kind of description often given to astronomical objects like stars and planets. Other observations that indicated it was probably Mars were:

1. It was described as deep orange in color. Mars is orangish-red.
2. It was described as four times brighter than any known star. Arcturus, the brightest star in the eastern sky is magnitude -0.04. Mars on this date was about magnitude -1.25. A -1 magnitude star is 2.5 times as bright as a magnitude 0 star.

To me, the kicker is the fact that the witnesses reported it still being visible when they ceased their observations forty minutes later and, despite reporting the sighting to Westover AFB, nobody else seemed to have noticed the UFO. This indicates the object was probably astronomical in nature.



Photograph of Mars on February 22nd, 2014. At the time Mars (magnitude -0.13), which is as bright as Arcturus (magnitude 0.15) and Spica (magnitude 0.95). Mars is obviously brighter than Spica. Mars and Arcturus show a distinctive orange hue compared to the blue star Spica.

Is it solved?

Considering the problems we know concerning eyewitness testimony, I consider Mars a likely solution. That does not mean it is a solution that will be accepted by many UFOlogists because the witnesses did not precisely pinpoint or describe Mars. That is their opinion but I still consider classifying this one as "probably Mars".

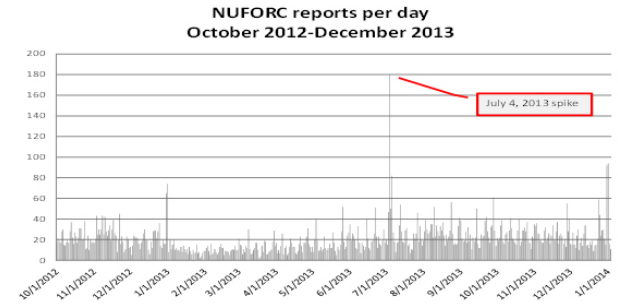
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Independent Ufos

by Marty Kottmeyer

180 ufo events occurred on July 4, 2013 that were reported to the National UFO Reporting Center. This day had the single largest volume of ufo reports for that year. Peter Davenport who collects and posts the reports on his website was impressed by the unusual volume and took note of it in a message dated on the morning of July 6th. He further offered the observation that similar bursts of activity on July 4th had been seen for the past several years. Presumably for the benefit of debunkers who might accidentally have been visiting the site he added, "Our strong impression is that most of the reports submitted for that date this year are not the result of firework displays."

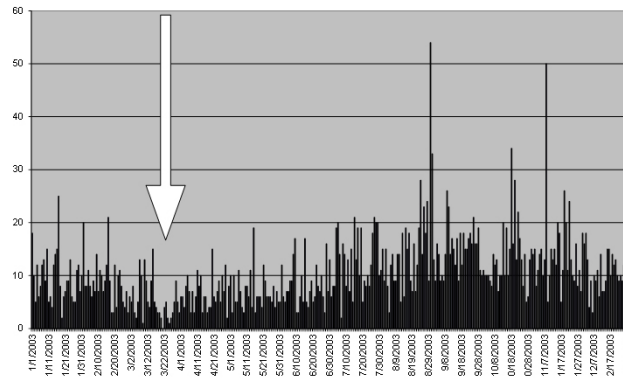


NUFORC database was accessed February 2, 2014 and some earlier dates in compiling this chart.

I regard this as a particularly funny puzzle, but for very different reasons than most skeptics and believers would have on first exposure to this observation. To begin with, I stumbled upon this because I charted the data in NUFORC for 2013 as part of a longstanding habit of checking predictions made by ufologists and people associated with the ufo phenomenon.[<http://www.anomalist.com/features/waiting.html>] Back in the 1970s, David R. Saunders, notorious outcast from the Condon Project, believed he found a pattern of to some ufo waves with a gradual onset.(Saunders 1976) They were separated by 61 months and moved eastwards in 30-degree steps. It was, some felt, a de-natured modification of what had been called the Mars cycle. Ufologists used to argue that ufo flaps were timed by the orbit of Mars.(Vallee & Vallee 1962) When an astrophysicist Charles Smiley (1967) eventually bothered to compute the ideal orbits for Martians to take, he found the flaps did not actually line up with physical theory. The theory crumbled from additional problems, but there were still those flaps to contend with. They still seemed to be coming around every few years for 'some' unknown reason. Saunders held there was still some abstract truth in there being a cycle and posed it in purely mathematical terms divorced from any explanatory mechanism like armadas from Mars timed to take advantage to the planets' proximity to each other.

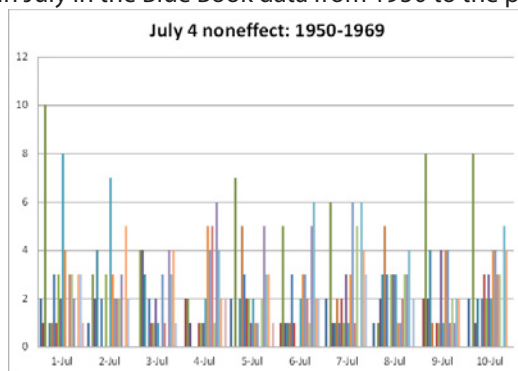
Saunders theory is now little more than nostalgia, but, being a sometimes-nostalgic sort of person, I could not avoid noticing that July 2013 was a test point in the general theory. I wanted to add the latest result on the theory for my records. I had no expectation it would prove correct and indeed thought it would fail as it had the last couple times I checked. Most notoriously Donald Johnson had in 2003 tried to revive the Saunders cycle with some modification, writing, "There will be a worldwide UFO wave in the month of March 2003 that will reach its maximum between March 15 and March 25. I am reasonably confident that this wave will involve Northern Europe. Another likely region is the Pacific Ocean, including Japan and the Hawaiian Islands, and possibly the Alaskan Aleutian Islands."The NUFORC data was rather cruel to Johnson, actually having a day – March 21st – with no activity at all.

2003

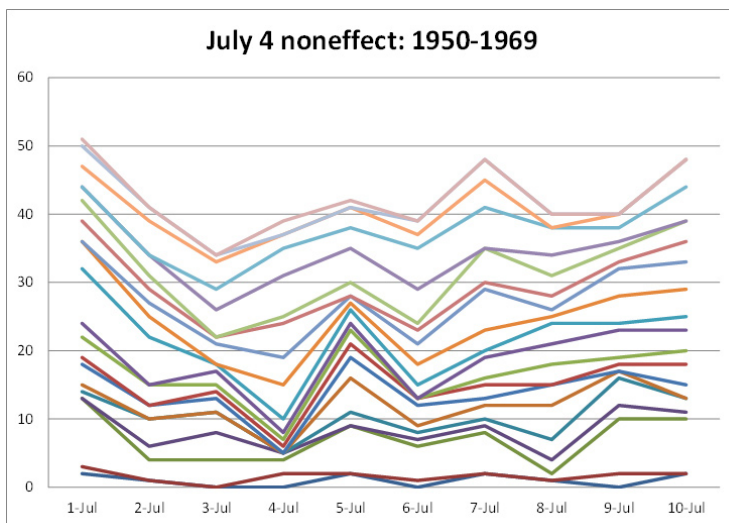


How could it be that the Saunders theory was correct in 2013 after such a risible failure? Well, actually, in one sense it wasn't correct. One of the conditions of success wasn't met. The July 4th spike did not show a gradual onset as the Saunders' theory was intended to apply to. There were 47 reports the day before, barely noticeably above average, and July 6th's 82 reports at best extends a horizontal spread to 4 days to this above normal activity. Not exactly a flap like those one seen in the 1950s and 1960s that typically lasted weeks. And then there is Davenport's observation that we had similar spikes in prior years on July 4th. How could this possibly have any real connection to the 61 month cycle phenomenon?

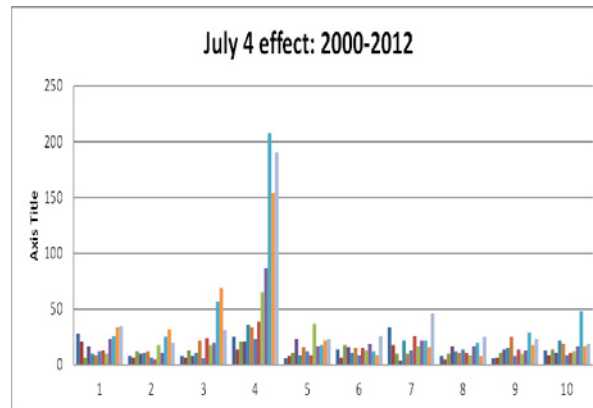
I became curious about the July 4th spike for an additional reason. I have been advancing a theory for some time that flaps and elevated ufo reporting was correlated to periods of national shame which, in turn, elevates paranoia and over-interpreting stimuli in fearful or threatening ways.(Kottmeyer 1995/6, 2006). As July 4s typically are times for displays of national pride, flaps for such dates run completely against that theory. In point of fact, I had checked Blue Book data for evidence of a suppressing effect on July 4th when I first worked on the theory. Though I was satisfied there was in fact evidence for July 4th tending be a date when ufos were around less than normal, I didn't bother to bring up the matter in my published work. I knew it could be countered and dismissed by certain methods and I felt its rhetorical value would be weaker than other points I planned to make. It was far more important to know why flaps happened when they did than why the more numerous lulls happened when they did. Here are two charts of the Blue Book data that gives some sense to why I was satisfied July 4 was no threat to any paranoia/shame theory of ufo flaps. This one charts ufo numbers for the first ten days in July in the Blue Book data from 1950 to the project's dissolution in 1969.



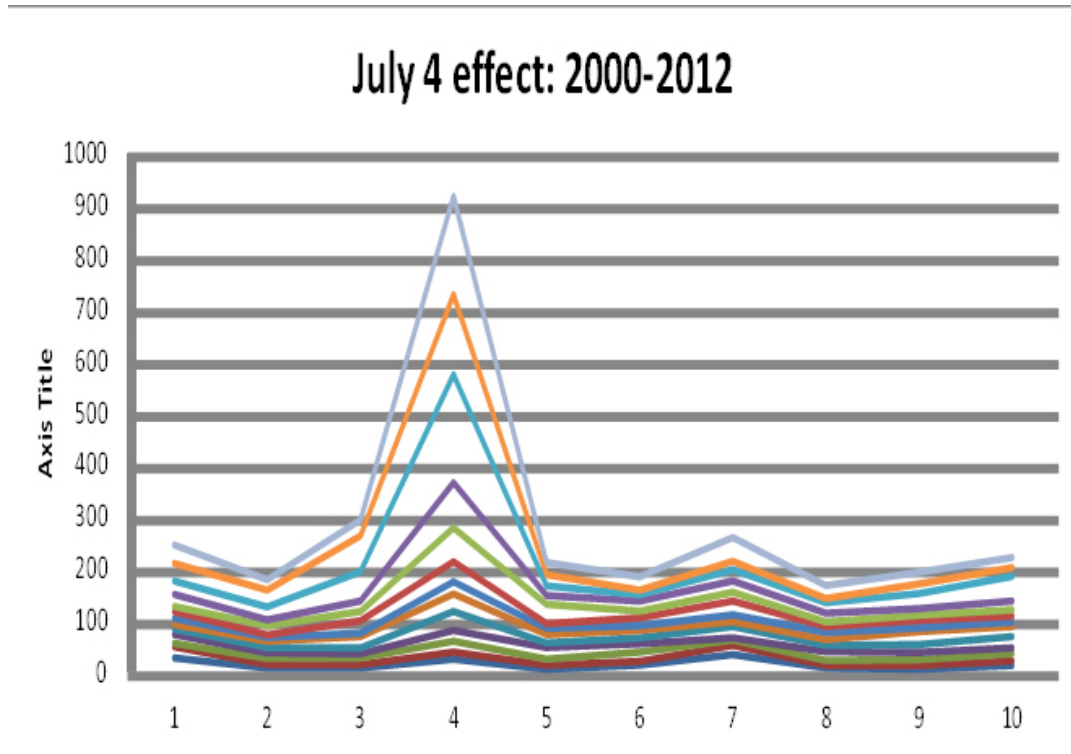
This next version aggregates the data, stacks the numbers on top of each other. This one gives a particularly good feel for how in many years July 4 was giving a decrease in activity from the day before and why I felt that I would be safe from criticism should anybody else think to look at Blue Book to test my idea in this same way. I should add that I looked at some ufo data from around 1990 collected by Ferrughelli and was similarly satisfied there was nothing there to pose a challenge.



Reading Davenport's observation, I decided to look into it. I charted the first ten days of July for the years 2000 to 2012 and was entirely satisfied he was correct. Here is the data charted to give the volume per day for the years looked at:



Here is the data aggregated, stacked, and confirming quite unambiguously there is a general July 4 effect.



I will add that a look at the numbers shows July 4 has been the most active day in these series rather consistently since 2004 and has been particularly striking since 2008.

1-Jul	28	21	7	17	10	9	12	13	10	23	26	34	35
2-Jul	8	7	12	10	11	12	7	5	18	11	25	32	20
3-Jul	8	7	13	8	11	22	6	24	18	20	57	69	31
4-Jul	25	14	21	21	36	34	23	39	65	87	208	154	190
5-Jul	6	8	11	23	9	16	12	9	37	17	18	22	23
6-Jul	14	7	18	16	11	15	9	15	13	19	12	9	26
7-Jul	34	18	10	4	22	10	13	26	17	22	22	16	46
8-Jul	8	5	10	17	12	11	14	11	9	17	20	8	25
9-Jul	6	7	11	14	15	25	8	14	10	13	29	18	23
10-Jul	13	9	14	11	22	19	9	11	12	17	48	17	19
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012

NUFORC database was accessed January 14, 2014 for the data used for this table and the July 4 effect charts.

Clearly there is a problem and a puzzle here. The question that bodes big in my mind is why this July 4th effect has arisen in the

NUFORC data, but there was nothing whatsoever in the Blue Book data to suggest the presence of such a July 4th phenomenon.

A colleague, Luis Gonzalez, was quick to point out that the July 4th effect is clearly worthless to the pro-ETH theorists. "UFOs celebrating a local historic day? I do not think even believers could believe extraterrestrials would be so parochial." Even if we wanted to believe they have curiosity about fireworks displays, why does this curiosity seemingly start only in the present millennium and why does it increase dramatically over the past 5 years?

The obvious first guess is that this is an audience effect. People are outside watching the sky for fireworks or just outside and traveling to events. There is some support for this position when one notices that ufo reports also tend to be elevated in the NUFORC data for the evening of December 31st and morning of January 1st when there are also fireworks displays nowadays. But why is there is no July 4 effect in the Blue Book data? Possibly one could explain that by the fact that Blue Book tends to get reports from military sources with some additions from cases that appears in newspapers and wire services. The sorts of reports that are merely personally odd, but of no active concern or worry are filtered away by intervening gatekeepers. NUFORC has no such filtering. Any strange light gets reported there whether the emailer is worried or not. Yet, can that mechanism really be so efficient as to suppress any audience effect? There were surely more eyes skyward for fireworks displays on the 4th in the 50s and 60s, even military eyes, than on other July evenings.

I skimmed through some of the reports of July 4, 2013 and another possibility occurred to me. A number seemed pretty certainly to be caused by releases of Chinese lanterns – the number and slow movement across the sky being the dominant consideration. [Locations: Long Lake, NY; 21:30 – North Platte, NE; 22:00; Portland, TN; 22:50] A few others seemed possibly the result of balloons carrying flares [Naugatuck, CT; 21:15] or other means of illumination like LEDs [Tinley Park, IL; 20:00.] Could this be a modern hoaxing fad? Could it be people are releasing attention-getting items specifically because they know there is an audience for such sights during fireworks displays? Could something like the Tinley Park, Illinois mass sighting of August 21, 2004 – an obvious balloon hoax despite efforts by UFO Hunters in their second season opener (2009) to prove otherwise - have provided the seed of attention to inspire hoaxers to make copycat light displays out of simple playful mischief?

I learned I am not the first person to suspect such hoaxing is behind the July 4th effect. When Davenport posted some information about elevated activity of ufo sightings in July 2010, Martin Shough and Robert Powell offered arguments about the involvement of Chinese Lanterns fire balloons.(UFO Updates thread, 2010) Some videos of July 4th ufos were linked into one of the skeptical posts with the observation that the motions seemed not anomalous at all and clearly consistent with objects being carried by a slow breeze. Davenport insisted he weeds out such mundane IFO material while granting in-depth investigation would be time-consuming. It was additionally remarked that Chinese lantern hoaxing is so common in England, people there now don't even bother to report them, but here the information has not got around. It seems to be some sort of modern fashion among the prankstering percentage of the population.

Is this is a workable solution? Can there really be so many hoaxers out there to account for the hundred-fifty or so excess above normal in 2013? I confess I feel a bit hesitant to even invoke the possibility that copycats have arisen in such numbers in the past decade. Seemingly it is not an organized effort – at least I've not heard any rumors to that effect. I wonder if I am still missing a piece or two to make proper sense of this social phenomenon.

So, I'm throwing this up for other skeptics to bat around – anybody care enough to explain to me why we are seeing so many Independence Day ufos in recent years, when they seemingly did not do this back in the Fifties and Sixties?

Paul Ferrughelli, National Sighting Yearbook 1990, National Sighting Research Center, 1991

Donald Johnson, "C.E.: Worldwide UFO Wave Prediction 03-15-03" UFO Updates, January 8. 2003.

Martin Kottmeyer, "UFO Flaps: An Analysis – The Alexander Imich Award Winning UFO Essay" in The Anomalist #3, Winter 1995/96, pp. 64-89 rewritten as "Waves" in Ronald Story, ed. The Encyclopedia of Extraterrestrial Encounters: A Definitive Illustrated A-Z Guide to All Things Alien New American Library, 2001, pp.

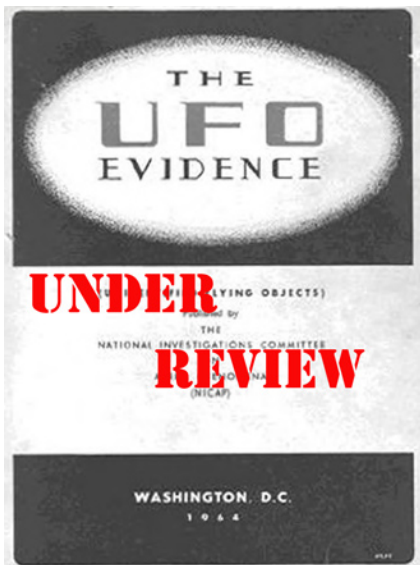
Martin Kottmeyer, "Did The Katrina Debacle Increase Ufo Reporting? A Test of the Collective Shame Theory of Flaps," Magonia Supplement, #61, 17 May 2006; pp. 1-3.

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Charles Smiley, "The 8:05 from Mars is Late" The New Report on Flying Saucers by True magazine #2, 1967, pp. 30-1, 65

UFO Updates thread material: Peter Davenport: "Peculiar & Dramatic Sightings During July" July 14, 2010: <http://ufoupdateslist.com/2010/jul/m14-001.shtml> and <http://ufoupdateslist.com/2010/jul/m16-001.shtml> + Martin Shough: <http://ufoupdateslist.com/2010/jul/m17-002.shtml> + Robert Powell: <http://ufoupdateslist.com/2010/jul/m17-007.shtml>

Jacques Vallée & Janine Vallée, "Mars and the Flying Saucers: A contribution to the scientific study of the periodicity of the flying saucer phenomenon in its correlation with the oppositions of Mars" Flying Saucer Review, 8, #5, September-October 1962, pp 5-11.



August 28, 1954 - Oklahoma City

NICAP lists a case in its chronology that should have an extensive paper trail that I wanted to examine:

*August 28, 1954--Oklahoma City, Okla. Fifteen UFOs in precise triangular formation observed by hundreds of citizens, Tinker AFB radar. [VIII]*¹

Section VII is titled "special evidence" and it falls into the Radar category. Hoping for more information, I turned to the page and found the following brief statement:

*Fifteen UFOs in triangle formation tracked on radar, chased by jets; changed to semi-circle formation and sped away.*²

There is no mention of radar and the source listed is Donald Keyhoe's "Flying Saucer Conspiracy". There is no additional information so I decided to see if project Blue Book had a case for that date and would provide me with the paper trail that, I thought, should exist.

Blue Book's response is ...

Instead of an extensive file, Blue Book's record of this case is almost non-existent. They do list a case for that date but it states that it is for Information only and no solution is given. It is not even listed as "unidentified".³ So what happened?

3/8728	Daventry, Becon Hill, England	Military	Astro (METEOR)
3/8828	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Maney)(INFO)		
3/8929	Prince Christian, Greenland		UNIDENTIFIED

A search of the files reveals a series of documents regarding this case. It starts with a letter on July 16, 1960 from the James Maney, who had the title of "deputy director" of a UFO group called "Interplanetary intelligence of Unidentified Flying Objects". He wrote the following:⁴

① In accordance with paragraph 8 of AFR 200-2, I should like to request the analysis of the formation of fifteen UFOs, seen, tracked by radar, and pursued by interceptors over Oklahoma City on 28 August 1954. I was referred to your office by 1st Lt Thomas W. Leavitt, USAF Public Information Officer for the Oklahoma City Air Defense Sector Manual, Oklahoma City Air Force Station, Okla., in a letter dated 27 June 1960.

ATIC reported that they had no records of any UFO sightings over Oklahoma City in August of 1954. This prompted Colonel Tacker to respond with a letter on August 5, stating that they had no record of such an event and that they suggested for Maney to look into the local newspapers.⁵

Because Blue Book seems unaware of this event, I was left going to other sources to determine the details of this sighting.

Other sources

Brad Sparks includes this in his list of unidentified Blue Book cases:

*Aug. 28, 1954. Tinker AFB, Okla. (35.42° N, 97.37° W). 8:30 p.m. Several USAF pilots flying fighters saw a triangular formation of 15 objects, tracked by ground radar. (Sparks; Weinstein)*⁶

The location is simply the latitude and longitude for Tinker AFB. It is not the location of any actual sighting. The "Sparks" source is not very specific. All we can assume is that this is based on Sparks' personal research so it is hard to determine exactly what sources he used. If you examine the Weinstein file, we find that his source is NICAP's document and Larry Hatch's database. Larry Hatch's database is unavailable but it uses Keyhoe as a source! It appears that almost all the information about this UFO sighting is traced back to Donald Keyhoe.

Keyhoe describes the event in "The Flying saucer conspiracy":

Some reports, of course, are bound to leak out, especially when sighted near cities. But even when local papers run front-page stories, the

UFO censors often deny the reports or quickly explain them away. One such incident occurred in August of '54.

At 8:30 pm, a formation of 15 flying saucers approached Oklahoma City. Picked up by radar, the strange machines were spotted from Tinker AFB. Within seconds, by standing orders of the Air Defense Command, a flight of jets was dispatched.

Under AFR 200-2, emergency teletype messages were flashed to ADC Headquarters, to ATIC and the Pentagon. At the same time, warning alerts were phoned to Will Rogers Airport, the Oklahoma State Police and to GOC (Ground Observer Corps) posts in a radius of 200 miles.

Meanwhile, in precision triangular formation, the fifteen saucers had raced over the edge of the city. The jets, guns set to fire, hurtled after them at full power. Abruptly the formation broke. Changing into a semicircle, the saucers speeded up and vanished into the west.

Immediately, additional alerts were flashed to western Air Filter Centers. When the Tinker Field pilots landed, after a fruitless chase, they were bombarded with questions by a team of Intelligence officers. Then the teletypes clattered again, with urgent follow-up reports.

But though the saucer chase had been seen by hundreds in the city, and the alert was confirmed by the State Police, Tinker Field officers refused to admit the sighting.

Time and again, in the past year, Air Defense fighters have streaked up into the night, trying to force down saucers hovering over our cities. Yet few of these incidents are officially admitted.⁷

In his book, "Flying Saucers: Top Secret", Keyhoe states he had seen a script for a program called, "Look to the skies". The funny thing about it, is that Keyhoe reports the script was written and approved by the USAF! To him this implied the USAF had confirmed the story. However, the script he cites is an EXACT replica of the above passage.⁸ It provided no new information and was simply parroting what Keyhoe had written. This "script" has never appeared in the public domain that I am aware of and was simply based on Keyhoe's book. It was not based on any additional data or information.

Looking through the newspaper archive, I found no reference to this case. There were several UFO sightings around this date and one was pretty close to Oklahoma city in Woodward, Oklahoma. This was seen by 1500 people and was determined to be a balloon. I discussed this with several individuals, including Herb Taylor. Herb concluded, as had I, that it must have been in the Oklahoma City newspaper. I was in the process of asking a friend in the Oklahoma region to check the local library when Herb contacted Barry Greenwood. Greenwood provided this article that appeared in the Oklahoman on August 29, 1954⁹:

Publication: The Oklahoman; Date:1954 Aug 29; Section:None; Page 2

Airforce Keeps Eyes Peeled At Reports of Strange Objects

Strange aerial objects were reported sighted northeast of Oklahoma City Saturday and Tinker airforce base was checking into the reports.

Descriptions of the objects varied somewhat. They were, however, seen at approximately the same time in the same general vicinity. All observers said the objects were flying in a triangular flight pattern and carried a luminous glow.

Tinker officials said no information could be given because of security restrictions. The highway patrol and Will Rogers field said Tinker had notified them to be on the watch out for the objects.

The weather bureau at the Municipal airport doubted objects could not have been weather balloons, one of which was released shortly after 9 p.m. The objects were sighted between 8:30 and 9. One forecaster said clouds and lightning in the north-

east section of the state could have caused apparitions.

Mrs. R. H. Cox, of 817 NE 31, said she saw from 15 to 20 objects flying at a very high rate of speed and headed west. She said they had the shape of a regular airplane, but no noise could be heard. All of the objects were glowing brightly as if painted with luminous paint. She said the brilliant glow frightened her small children.

Her husband said the objects were flying in a triangular pattern, then changed into a semi-circular formation as they headed west.

The weather bureau said local weather conditions would not cause apparitions. Skies were clear with relatively few clouds. They doubted the possibility of search light reflections on low clouds.

Some persons who reported seeing the objects to the Daily Oklahoman wouldn't give their names.

The exact number of witnesses is not listed so it is hard to determine where the number of “hundreds” came from. We have some unnamed witnesses and one named source, which gave the description of seeing luminous sources in a triangular pattern that changed into a semi-circle as they flew west. We have no idea if the other witnesses even saw the same thing! There is no mention of any radar contact or jets pursuing these UFOs in the article. One would expect some of these hundreds” of witnesses would have seen the jets mentioned by Keyhoe and reported it to the news media.

Why is this case even listed?

We don’t know what these witnesses actually saw. They might have been birds in formation illuminated by city lights or alien spaceships. However, the idea of a jet chase and radar contact seems to be based solely on “inside sources” that Keyhoe used. Are those “inside sources” legitimate or are they nothing more than rumors that he printed as “facts”? Did anybody ever research this case beyond what Keyhoe had written?

It is a fact that something was reported as being seen that night. However, what is presented in the UFO evidence is a version of events that can not be verified and appears to be an exaggeration of what actually transpired. Radar operators/technicians, pilots, aircraft support crews, and air tower personnel would have been aware of this event. The lack of a single confirming witness to this part of the case makes it unlikely that it happened this way. Keyhoe’s sensationalist style of writing has been accepted as factual but there is absolutely nothing to prove the claims of radar contact or jets attempting an intercept.

This case is based on, as far as I can tell, one newspaper report and “rumors”. At best it is an “insufficient information” classification. To consider this case as proof that UFOs are “manifestations of extraterrestrial life”¹⁰ is wishful thinking.

Notes and references

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4. “July 16, 1960 letter James Maney to Col. Lawrence Tacker.” Fold 3 web site. Available WWW: <http://www.fold3.com/image/8726389/>
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8. Keyhoe, Donald. Flying Saucers: Top Secret. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons. 1960. Pages 223-224.
9. “Airforce keeps eyes peeled at reports of strange objects”. The Oklahoman. August 29, 1954 Page 2. Courtesy of Barry Greenwood.
10. Hall, Richard M. (Ed.) The UFO evidence. The National Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP). New York: Barnes and Noble. 1997. P. 179.

I would like to thank Herb Taylor and Barry Greenwood for their help obtaining the Oklahoma City newspaper article presented here.

UFOs on the tube

Uncovering Aliens: Alien Harvesting

This is just one episode in a series that involves one of those UFO investigative teams that is presented as taking a balanced approach in evaluating UFO reports. The team's members are Mike Bara (experienced aeronautics engineer), Maureen Elsberry (respected UFO journalist), Steven Jones (self-proclaimed contactee), and Derrel Simms (private investigator/Ex-CIA/abductee). Elsberry experience as a "UFO journalist" is through "Open Minds" and she helps organize the international UFO congress. The other "skeptic", Mike Bara, stars in the show "Ancient Aliens" and has written a book with the title of "Ancient aliens on Mars". Derrel Simms wears a signature black hat and long coat like he is something out of the old west. His claims of being associated with the CIA are dubious at best. If you couple this group with a contactee, you really can't expect much more than the usual UFO investigations where the right questions are never asked.

The show focuses on Matthew Reed, who experienced an hour and a half of missing time on March 30, 2009. He claims his car was magnetized and that it was irradiated. However, we never see an investigation into the car or any records of this. Reed claims the sky was clear (it was overcast according to weather underground) as he saw an orange light that he followed. At this point he experienced his missing time and later found himself standing out in the middle of field two miles away.

Simms and Bara investigate the field and Simms shows how he can detect radiation in the snow! Of course, this is not the same snow and ground that was present three to four years early so these measurements are totally bogus. I don't find anything about his readings that unusual and one can get these kinds of readings from man-made and natural sources. I would not be shocked if the program planted a small radioactive test source beneath the snow to produce this effect.

The show spends a lot of time talking to the Reed and taking him for a ride where he suddenly remembers where he was abducted. He then makes the claim that he and his brother were abducted decades earlier when they were younger. Reed's brother is interviewed and confirms this. The doctor, who examined Reed, states that the marks looked like they were made with a scalpel. I guess the Aliens resort to such primitive surgery as using a knife. So much for advanced technology.

Steven Jones talked to Timothy Good, who makes the wild claim that this is all about hybridization of the human race. His babbling about world-wide conspiracies and underground bases (including ones under the oceans!) is just pure nonsense but the team members buy it hook, line, and sinker. They tell Reed and his brother that they have been selected to help advance the evolution of the human race! They appear to be excited to find out that they were among the "chosen"!

"Skeptic" Mike Bara tried to explain this all away as the car being struck by lightning. The show spends some time trying to see if a lightning strike could cause a loss of memory. After a bizarre experiment that shows it is possible, they suddenly decide to look at the weather records, which shows there were no lightning storms in the area! Why not look before wasting a lot of time with the experiment? It demonstrated that the producers were setting up a straw man in the skeptical approach. They failed to explore the possibility that he was lying or fantasizing. There is no real evidence that his story is even true.

This is another one of those poorly produced programs being developed by the Discovery channel that is presented as an unbiased group of investigators but fails to meet minimal standards of being such. This show is as bad as "UFO Hunters". Don't waste your time..

Buy it, borrow it, or bin it

Wonders in the sky by Jacques Vallee and Chris Aubeck

I had heard good things about this book and finally decided to purchase a copy. The book is a collection of all unusual aerial phenomena throughout human history up to the year 1879.

The book has three main sections. The first is the chronology of events that the authors found worth listing. The second is a listing of cases that the determined were hoaxes, religious visions, or celestial/atmospheric phenomenon. The third section explained the author's methodology of determining which cases went into which sections of the book.

I found some of the cases listed in the first section somewhat questionable. I have serious reservations for any case taken from the bible because this source can't really be considered a reliable historical source. Other cases included were interesting but should not be included. As an amateur astronomer, I was familiar with astronomers reporting solar transits of objects/planets other than Venus or Mercury and satellites of Venus. Because we know that these objects do not exist, one has to draw the conclusion as probable observer/instrument error. Despite my criticism of selecting some of these cases, others were more interesting and not easy to explain. They come from credible historical sources and report something was seen. It is the interpretation of what was seen that is in question.

The second section had the title "Myths, legends, and chariots of the gods". It exposes quite a few hoaxes that have been repeated over the years. This has a lot to do with various authors never bothering to check their sources. This kind of "research" is not unheard of in UFOlogy. I commend Aubeck and Vallee for their effort in actually looking into these matters and exposing these cases for what they are.

The book is a superb collection of unusual aerial sightings predating the year 1879 and is a very good resource. I consider it a "buy it" book that belongs in any UFO library..